

The picture is somewhat different if one includes into this consideration the con-
 sious efforts made during the initial years of the depression to continue public con-
 struction activity despite, or because of, the decline of private building. Total con-
 struction volume in the United States was maintained or kept from falling further
 1930 and 1931 through the volume of public construction (see table 1). Not all
 that was the result of unemployment considerations, but some of it probably was.
 1932, however, overall volume sharply declined. Although public construction
 d decrease less precipitately than private construction, as is indicated by the per-
 ntage rise, the difference in reduction was patently insufficient to check economic
 saster. The Public Works Administration created during the New Deal under Title
 of the National Industrial Recovery Act disposed of approximately \$2.2 billion
 r public construction purposes.⁵⁹ In comparison, the endeavors to use public works
 the fight against unemployment made by the federal government and the various
 ates before the advent of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration can therefore
 erely be characterized as seminal.

uring the last weeks of the Hoover administration a Roosevelt man observed that
 n this matter of promoting public works in order to increase employment there
 no national and local effort to coordinate and study the scheme." The reproachful
 ne of that remark is understandable and, in view of the accomplishments of the
 ew Deal, perhaps not entirely unjustified. But it has also to be kept in mind that
 ie corresponding insight could only be gained, or at least confirmed, through the
 perience of the preceding years and decades. The way from the era that stressed
 ividualism, self-reliance, and "sound" business principles to the time that ac-
 pted the idea that governmental intervention could be a good thing and that
 udget balancing could constitute a "fundamental folly" in an economic crisis was
 ng and not at all necessarily clear and obvious throughout.⁶⁰ The American public
 ad first to learn that workers could lose their jobs in an industrial society through
 o fault of their own and that it was the public's task to look after them. Meeting
 at obligation necessarily involved an expansion of governmental power, both ad-
 ministrative and financial. Such a development occurred during World War I, but
 ecause it was clearly understood to be a temporary experience, a conscious effort
 as made after the end of the hostilities to dismantle much of the apparatus created
 r the emergency. Claiming that unemployment constituted an emergency equal
 o war seemed to question the traditional "American way of life." The economic
 ownturns of 1914-1915 and 1921 did not last long enough to upset the fun-
 amentals of that belief, and it took the Great Depression to bring the point home.

association, *Proceedings*, 39 (March 1934), 84; Paul Webbink, "Unemployment in the United States, 1930-40,"
American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings, 30 (Feb. 1941), 259.

⁵⁹ This sum excludes projects apart from the regular public works program of construction. Gayer, *Public Works*,
 1-95.

⁶⁰ Robert D. Kohn, "Memorandum Prepared at the suggestion of the 'Group' at the Meeting of January 13th,"
 n. 13, 1933, microfilm, reel 66, Andrews Papers; "How Sound Is This Clamor for Salvation by Budget-Bal-
 ancing?" *American City*, 46 (June 1932), 5.

NOVEMBER ELECTIONS:

The Cuban Missile Crisis and American Politics, 1962

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Thomas G. Paterson and William J. Brophy

He was informed -
 "October 1962"

"I told you that the President would move on Cuba before [the] election," Sen.
 Norris Cotton of New Hampshire reminded his constituents a week after President
 John F. Kennedy had dramatically announced that the United States was imposing
 a quarantine against Cuba to force Soviet missiles from the Caribbean island. An-
 other Republican standing for reelection in 1962, Rep. Thomas B. Curtis of Mis-
 souri, told voters in his district that the Cuban missile crisis was "phony and con-
 trived for election purposes." Republican Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona, like
 many others, suspected that the Kennedy administration had played politics with
 foreign policy to help Democrats in the congressional elections of November 6.¹

The claim — and fear — that presidents play politics with foreign policy, especially
 in electoral seasons, is familiar and often well founded. Throughout American his-
 tory, suspicions have flourished that presidents take unusual and sometimes extreme
 diplomatic or military steps, utter hyperboles, practice deceit, or manufacture for-
 eign crises to improve their own and their party's chances at the polls. Like political
 leaders before him, Kennedy had invited imputations that he exploited foreign-
 policy issues for political gain or that he made diplomatic decisions in response to
 domestic political pressure. Indeed, about a month before the missile crisis,
 Kennedy had made a conspicuous political decision in foreign affairs: to sell Hawk
 missiles to Israel. American Jews had lobbied intensely for the sale; some of them
 had even withheld contributions from congressional candidates until they saw
 Kennedy act on the deal. The sale of those short-range missiles, the administration

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 of history at Stephen F. Austin State University.

¹ Press Release, Oct. 30, 1962, Norris Cotton Papers (University of New Hampshire Library, Durham); Thomas
 B. Curtis to Thomas G. Paterson, Jan. 6, 1984 (in Paterson's possession); *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1962, pp. 1,
 8; *ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1962, p. 16; *ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1962, p. 7; *ibid.*, Sept. 10, 1964, p. 17. See also F. Clifton White,
Suite 3505: The Story of the Draft Goldwater Movement (New Rochelle, 1967), 82; and Frank S. Meyer, "The 1962
 Elections: The Turning of the Tide," *National Review*, Dec. 4, 1962, p. 434. Many congressional manuscript collec-
 tions contain letters from constituents who charged John F. Kennedy with political gamesmanship in his handling
 of the missile crisis. See, for example, the letters in box 145, Milton R. Young Papers (University of North Dakota
 Library, Grand Forks).

lained at the time, was designed to balance Communist weapons shipments to /pt, Iraq, and Syria. But "the reason it was done was politics," the United States bassador to Egypt, John S. Badeau, later concluded.²

Politics certainly preoccupied Kennedy in the fall of 1962. The president and his es eagerly looked to the forthcoming elections to produce a more sympathetic ngress. To be sure, the Democrats controlled the Senate 65-35 and the House Representatives 263-174. Yet the Democratic administration could never count a working majority for its domestic proposals. House committees were chaired conservative southerners; and in the Senate, Republicans and southern mocrats often teamed up to thwart Kennedy's requests. Medicare failed by a 52 48 vote; the farm bill lost by five votes in the House. In 1961 only 48.4 percent Kennedy's legislative initiatives gained approval; in 1962, 44.6 percent. mocratic gains or the prevention of losses in the 1962 elections, then, promised ease or at least not to aggravate Kennedy's struggle with Congress. Even more; sen. J. William Fulbright (Democrat from Arkansas) privately remarked: "If he sn't get them [Congress] in hand and cooperating, his regime will be a failure."³ Some historians and political scientists have also thought that the president was ven in the Cuban missile crisis as much by political motives as by considerations national security or prestige. James A. Nathan, Barton J. Bernstein, and others e suggested that Kennedy boldly confronted the Soviets and initially eschewed let diplomacy to resolve the conflict because a forthright, public display of tough- s would disarm Republicans who had been lambasting the administration over ba and would improve Democratic chances in the congressional elections and be- se private talks could not be kept secret—leaks would be inevitable and politi- ly damaging to the administration. Kennedy partisans such as Theodore C. ensen and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in contrast, have downplayed or discounted itics in their accounts of presidential decision making during the crisis. But even y have noted a linkage between the election results and the crisis. Another nnedy appointee, Roger Hilsman of the Department of State, has been frank in alling that "behind the policy choices loomed domestic politics." Indeed, "the ited States might not [have been] in mortal danger but the administration most tainly was." But Hilsman's memoir nonetheless stressed questions of strategy and ernational prestige over domestic politics, and he later explained that by omestic politics" he meant, not the forthcoming elections specifically, but general reaucratic politics within the administration and relations with Congress. Other

John S. Badeau, *The Middle East Remembered* (Washington, 1983), 176; *New York Times*, Sept. 27, 1962, 1, 3. For other arguments that Kennedy made key decisions in part to avoid or deflect Republican criticism, Stephen Pelz, "John F. Kennedy's 1961 Vietnam War Decisions," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 4 (Dec. 1981), 85; and Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, "Anatomy of a Failure: The Decision to Land at the Bay of Pigs," *Political nce Quarterly*, 99 (Fall 1984), 484-85. For Richard M. Nixon's charge that Kennedy exploited the Cuban issue political gain in 1960, see Richard M. Nixon, *Six Crises* (New York, 1968), 379-84; and Kent M. Beck, "Necessary Hidden Truths: Cuba in the 1960 Campaign," *Diplomatic History*, 8 (Winter 1984), 37-59. Lewis J. Paper, *John F. Kennedy: The Promise and the Performance* (New York, 1979), 275; Theodore C. nsen, *Kennedy* (New York, 1965), 339-49; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy e White House* (Boston, 1965), 708-709; Herbert Matthews, Memorandum of Conversation with J. William ight, July 3, 1962, box 27, Herbert Matthews Papers (Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.).

writers have found a coincidence between the crisis and the congressional elections, but they have not investigated the relationship. Soviet works on the subject have found Kennedy's behavior rooted in United States intentions to crush the Cuban Revolution, not in American politics.⁴

Scholars cannot now be definitive about the relationship between politics and the Cuban missile crisis. Some documents remain unavailable to researchers, and participants kept no records of some conversations during the crisis.⁵ Presidents, moreover, necessarily make decisions that derive from a complex mix of private thoughts and public pressures that the historian cannot easily disentangle. And American voters are usually influenced by many issues—some personal, some local, some national, some international. Still, by posing precise questions and by applying extensive and heretofore largely unexplored research materials, scholars can refine the problem. We address it here with five sets of questions, organized chronologically.

First, how important was the Cuban issue to Republicans, Democrats, and the Kennedy administration in the fall of 1962 before October 16, the day the president

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⁴ James A. Nathan, "The Missile Crisis: His Finest Hour Now," *World Politics*, 27 (Jan. 1975), 262-65; Barton J. Bernstein, "The Cuban Missile Crisis," in *Reflections on the Cold War: A Quarter Century of American Foreign Policy*, ed. Lynn H. Miller and Ronald Pruessen (Philadelphia, 1974), 131-33; Barton J. Bernstein, "Was the Cuban Missile Crisis Necessary?" *Washington Post*, Oct. 26, 1975, p. D1; Barton J. Bernstein, "The Week We Almost Went to War," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 32 (Feb. 1976), 17; Barton J. Bernstein, "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Trading the Jupiters in Turkey?" *Political Science Quarterly*, 95 (Spring 1980), 124; Ronald Steel, "Endgame," *New York Review of Books*, March 13, 1969, p. 15; I. F. Stone, "The Brink," *ibid.*, April 14, 1966, pp. 13-14; Richard J. Walton, *Cold War and Counterrevolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy* (New York, 1972), 103-104, 130; Louise FitzSimons, *The Kennedy Doctrine* (New York, 1972), 169-72; Fen Osler Hampson, "The Divided Decision-Maker: American Domestic Politics and the Cuban Crisis," *International Security*, 9 (Winter 1984-85), 130-65. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., wrote that "it is hard to estimate the impact of the Cuba week on the election, though foreign crisis usually strengthens the administration in office." Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, 794-833, esp. 832-33. Theodore C. Sorensen commented that the Democrats did well in 1962 through hard work "aided to an undeterminable extent by [Kennedy's] handling of the crisis." Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 354, 667-722. See also Theodore C. Sorensen, *The Kennedy Legacy* (New York, 1969), 187-91; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston, 1978), 512-13, 517, 530; Kenneth P. O'Donnell and David F. Powers with Joe McCarthy, *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye: Memories of John Fitzgerald Kennedy* (Boston, 1972), 307-43; and Henry M. Pachter, *Collision Course: The Cuban Missile Crisis and Coexistence* (New York, 1963), 18-20. For Roger Hilsman's perspective, see Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, 1967), 176, 196-97; and Roger Hilsman and Ronald Steel, "An Exchange of Views," *New York Review of Books*, May 8, 1969, pp. 36-38. Other writers' accounts include, for example, Herbert S. Dinerstein, *The Making of a Missile Crisis: October 1962* (Baltimore, 1976), 185-90; Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston, 1971), 187-89; David Detzer, *The Brink: The Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (New York, 1979); Herbert S. Parmet, *JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (New York, 1983), 277-300; Richard N. Lebow, "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Reading the Lessons Correctly," *Political Science Quarterly*, 98 (Fall 1983), 443-45; Elie Abel, *The Missile Crisis* (Philadelphia, 1966), 56-57, 78; and Marc Trachtenberg, "The Influence of Nuclear Weapons in the Cuban Missile Crisis," *International Security*, 10 (Summer 1985), 162. For Soviet views, see Anatolii A. Gromyko, "The Caribbean Crisis," *Soviet Law and Government*, 11 (1972), 3-53; Anatolii A. Gromyko, *Through Russian Eyes: President Kennedy's 1036 Days* (Washington, 1973), 168-81; and Ronald R. Pope, ed., *Soviet Views on the Cuban Missile Crisis: Myth and Reality in Foreign Policy Analysis* (Washington, 1982).

⁵ For example, there seem to be no records of several conversations Robert F. Kennedy and the president held between meetings as they walked, stood on the balcony, or swam together in the White House swimming pool. President Kennedy's National Security Council Executive Committee (ExCom) also held "informal meetings" for which there appear to be no records. W. W. Rostow, "Participation in Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings, October 1962," Memorandum for the President, Oct. 5, 1968, Office Files of the President, Lyndon B. Johnson Papers (Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas). As well, at this writing, many documents remain security classified, closed by donor's request, or unprocessed: Robert F. Kennedy's Security Classified File; some summaries of National Security Council and ExCom meetings; transcripts of tapes for meetings of October 18 and 22.

as informed about the presence of the missiles? Before that date, just how troubled
as Kennedy by Republican charges that he was ignoring evidence of "offensive"
Soviet weapons in Cuba? Because the Cuban issue was becoming the noisiest one
and the president preferred to make Medicare the dominant issue, did Kennedy wel-
come or seek a crisis over Cuba that would enable him to fend off his critics before
the elections?²⁶ Put another way, was the political threat to the Democrats sufficient
to cause the president to manufacture or dangerously manipulate a confrontation
with the Soviet Union? 2. 3. 20 24 Sept - Oct 20? Information 16

Table 1
Preferences for Congressional Candidates, 1962
(By Party)

Month	Percentage Preferring the Democratic Party	Percentage Preferring the Republican Party
January	60	40
March	61	39
May	58	42
July	55	45
September	57	43
October	56	44
November	55.5	44.5

SOURCE: *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 5, 1962.

Polling data also revealed the improbability of a Republican victory in 1962. Throughout the year George H. Gallup's organization measured party preference. Polling results indicated a slight slippage for the Democrats but revealed no discernable trend toward the Republican party, even during the critical months of September and October (see table 1). The polls released by Gallup on October 24 and November 5 were particularly telling. The interviews for the October 24 release were conducted between October 1 and 7; polling data for the November 5 release were obtained between October 29 and November 2. Thus Gallup completed one set of interviews after Cuba had become a serious campaign issue but before the missile crisis and another set after both Kennedy's public confrontation with the Soviets and the Soviet decision to remove the missiles. No appreciable difference in results existed between the polls. Gallup also asked Americans which political party they thought "could do a better job of handling" the country's problems. On that question, too, the Democrats consistently outscored the Republicans (see table 2).¹¹

Another polling organization, Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., directly supplied the president with data and recommendations based on its findings. In an October 4, 1962, memorandum Louis Harris told Kennedy that he was "more in control of this election than ever before," provided that he continued to stress the Republicans' dangerous partisanship on foreign and domestic issues. By early October, Harris reported, civil rights, war and peace, and medical care had emerged as dominant issues. Harris's analysis revealed that Kennedy's handling of the Mississippi crisis (the tension and violence surrounding the enrollment of a black student, James Meredith, at the University of Mississippi in September) had won favor in key northern industrial states by as much as a three-to-one margin. Democrats could therefore emphasize the need for the type of strong leadership Kennedy had demonstrated by his sending of federal troops to Mississippi, as well as hit Republican obstructionism on other domestic issues, such as aid to the unemployed, depressed areas, the ill, and college students.

¹¹ George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971* (3 vols., New York, 1972), III, 1788.

Table 2
Preferences for Parties to Handle National Problems, 1962

Month	Percentage Preferring the Democratic Party	Percentage Preferring the Republican Party	No Difference
August ^a	34	17	35
September ^b	38	20	30
October ^c	35	20	33

SOURCE: Gallup Organization polling data (Roper Center, Institute for Social Inquiry, University of Connecticut, Storrs).

NOTE: Numbers do not add up to 100 because some respondents had no opinion or gave answers that did not fit the three categories.

^a Poll conducted August 23-28.

^b Poll conducted September 20-25.

^c Poll conducted October 19-24.

Harris also advised that Mississippi had taken "some of the edge off the Cuban issue," although most interviewees disapproved Kennedy's record on the latter (62 to 38). Still, a majority (68 to 32) opposed going to war in Cuba, and majorities ranging from 70 to 80 percent applauded Kennedy's toughness in holding the line in Berlin. On Cuba, Harris counseled, the Democrats should say that the Republicans were reckless, that they "would deliberately shoot craps with the destiny of this nation, would play petty politics with the national security." By reiterating such themes in domestic and foreign affairs, Harris prophesied, "you can alter the outcome in at least half the major Senate and Gubernatorial campaigns and can affect the results in 20 swing House Districts." Overall, then, the pollster Harris sketched for the president a rosy election picture just a couple of weeks before the missile crisis. Nowhere in the document was there the slightest hint that another foreign crisis, well managed by the White House, would improve already good Democratic chances in November.¹² The precrisis information from analysts thus pointed to an impressive Democratic performance in the midterm elections.

But I got plan from Harris.

The Cuban Issue before October 16

Soon after Fidel Castro's triumph in January 1959, Cuba became a political issue in the United States. When the Republicans were making foreign policy under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Democrats had asked why Castro and the increasingly radical Cuban Revolution were permitted to rise and flourish. When the Democrats under Kennedy were formulating foreign policy, Republicans charged that the administration was doing too little to unseat Castro and was allowing the Soviets to convert the Caribbean island into a Communist outpost. After Cuba and the Soviet Union signed a trade and aid agreement in February 1960, critics of the

¹² Lou Harris, "The New Shape of this Campaign," Memorandum to the President, Oct. 4, 1962, box 105, President's Office Files, John F. Kennedy Presidential Papers (Kennedy Library) (by permission of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.).

Castro regime who had been arguing that the Cuban Revolution had earlier turned "red" felt vindicated. The next month President Eisenhower ordered the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to train anti-Castro Cuban exiles for an invasion of their homeland. In July, in an attempt to cripple the Cuban economy and thus to weaken Castro, the administration cut Cuba's sugar quota, virtually stopping imports from the island; in October most American exports to Cuba were prohibited.¹³

Those events in the deterioration of Cuban-American relations sparked debate in the United States, particularly in the campaign of 1960. Kennedy repeatedly upbraided the Republicans, charging that they had let Cuba become a Communist satellite. Just before leaving office, Eisenhower broke diplomatic relations with Cuba. In April 1961 came the bungled CIA operation at the Bay of Pigs and swirling debate over its failure. As Kennedy lamented after the debacle, he had "handed his critics a stick with which they would forever beat him." The Bay of Pigs, Sorensen later said, was the administration's "heaviest political cross."¹⁴ With strident rhetoric echoing between Washington and Havana, the Kennedy administration set about to destroy the Castro government. The clandestine Operation Mongoose, begun in late 1961, included sabotage, paramilitary raids, disruption of the sugar trade, circulation of counterfeit money, and other so-called dirty tricks. As well, the CIA plotted to assassinate Castro. The secret war against Cuba did not weaken Castro's hold on the island, and it probably stimulated Cuban requests for Soviet protection. Nor did the covert operations disarm the Republicans, because the Kennedy administration, of course, could not take public credit for such activities. Then came the United States-engineered expulsion of Cuba from the Organization of American States in January 1962 and the imposition of a complete United States embargo on trade with Cuba the next month. As Cuba inched toward a closer relationship with the Soviet Union, the State Department, in March, complained about "Sino-Soviet bloc" military aid to Cuba.¹⁵

The question of a Soviet arms buildup in Cuba took on serious political dimensions in the summer of 1962 when Republican leaders began to mount an unrelenting attack against the Kennedy administration. The growing Soviet military presence in Cuba, of course, held significance in itself as a challenge to United States hegemony in Latin America. But it also provided an effective campaign issue that probed one of the administration's most vulnerable spots. And it served to divert attention from Republican vulnerabilities stemming from their opposition to popular New Frontier programs. Republicans thus strove to make Cuba, not Medicare, the leading topic of the congressional campaigns.

For the basic issues in United States-Cuba relations, see Cole Blasier, The Hovering Giant: U.S. Response to Revolutionary Change in Latin America (Pittsburgh, 1976); Lester D. Langley, The United States and the Caribbean in the Twentieth Century (Athens, Ga., 1982); Maurice Halperin, The Rise and Decline of Fidel Castro: An Essay in Contemporary History (Berkeley, 1972); Richard E. Welch, Jr., Response to Revolution: The United States and the Cuban Revolution, 1959-1961 (Chapel Hill, 1985); Morris H. Morley, "Toward a Theory of Imperial Politics: United States Policy and the Processes of State Formation, Disintegration and Consolidation in Cuba, 1898-1978" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York, Binghamton, 1980).

¹³ Peter Wyden, *Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story* (New York, 1979), 310; Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 669.
¹⁴ Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 468-98, 533-58; U.S. Department of State, "Sino-Soviet Bloc Military Aid to Cuba," Press Release No. 195, March 27, 1962, Kenneth Keating Papers (University of Rochester Library, Rochester, N.Y.).

and Soviet threat, invasion (not now tell, end '60)

The Republican indictment held that the administration was willfully withholding from the American people damning information about the enlargement of the Soviet military presence in Cuba and was underestimating the Soviet threat in the Caribbean. Whereas Kennedy argued that Soviet technicians had been stationed on the island, Republicans called them troops. Whereas Kennedy had insisted that Soviet missiles in Cuba were "defensive" (short-range surface-to-air), Republicans labeled them "offensive" (surface-to-air and surface-to-surface). Decrying a Soviet besmirching of the Monroe Doctrine, Republicans demanded immediate action—either a blockade or an invasion of Cuba. Uneasy Democrats dismissed such pleas as election-year high jinks but could not shed the charge that Kennedy was timid in curbing the flow of Soviet arms and personnel to Cuba. Kennedy himself admitted at a press conference on August 22 that supplies "in large quantities" had reached Cuba. Seven days later, in answer to charges made by Republican Sen. Homer E. Capehart, who was seeking reelection in Indiana, the president insisted that technicians, not troops, were accompanying the arms.¹⁶

Kennedy's statements hardly satisfied Kenneth B. Keating. The Republican senator from New York, who was not standing for reelection, became his party's chief protagonist on Cuba, making some twenty-five public statements prior to the missile crisis. In speech after speech Keating presented details that made him appear authoritative. In his first major assault, on August 31, he said, for example, "On August 13 five Soviet torpedo boats unloaded from Soviet ships, and are now moored at La Base." On September 4 in the Senate, Keating added more details on the Soviet military buildup and claimed there were missiles in Cuba, although as was common for him at first, he made little distinction between short-range, "defensive," surface-to-air missiles (SAMS) and longer-range, "offensive," surface-to-surface missiles (medium-range—MRBMS—and intermediate-range—IRBMS) that could reach the United States. That day the president tried to quiet the clamor by meeting with congressional leaders of both parties and by stating that neither Soviet combat troops nor ground-to-ground missiles existed in Cuba. But, he assured all, if "offensive" Soviet weapons ever appeared in Cuba, the "gravest issues would arise." The next day Keating dismissed the president's explanation: "Who is to say whether a weapon is offensive or defensive? It depends on the direction in which it is aimed." With others, such as Senator Goldwater, adding their voices of criticism, Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen of Illinois declared that "we Republicans are not dragging Cuba into the campaign, but the people are."¹⁷

The president temporarily took the initiative on September 7. Without specifically mentioning Cuba or Berlin, he asked Congress for standby authority to

... proposed to give the ... the ... a blockade ...
¹⁶ Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, John F. Kennedy: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1962 (Washington, 1963), 638, 652.

¹⁷ Congressional Record, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 14, Aug. 31, 1962, pp. 18359-18361; *ibid.*, Sept. 4, 1962, pp. 18438-18439; *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 1962, pp. 1, 2; press release, Sept. 5, 1962, Speech File, Keating Papers; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 333. For a chronology of relations between Cuba and the United States and the politics related thereto, see Republican Congressional Committee, "The Cuban Issue: A Chronology," May 1963, box 551, John Sherman Cooper Papers (University of Kentucky Library, Lexington); and U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee of Foreign Relations, *Events in United States-Cuba Relations: A Chronology 1917-1963* (Washington, 1963).

... ... will ... begin to ...

can up 150,000 military reservists to meet challenges in any part of the free world."¹⁸ Just hours before, Senator Dirksen and Rep. Charles A. Halleck (Republican of Indiana) had urged a more specific focus: a joint congressional resolution authorizing the president to use troops if necessary to "meet the Cuban problem." Although former President Eisenhower warned against making Cuba "an object of partisan fighting," many Republicans were determined to do just that in the congressional campaigns. Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota counterattacked for the Democrats. On September 11 he chastised "swaggering irresponsibles" in Congress who were trying "to make political capital." Even if there were threatening missiles in Cuba—and he denied that there were—the United States could destroy them in one day. One should not "lose a night's sleep worrying about the might of Cuba," Humphrey remarked. Unmoved, on the next day three Republican senators proposed amendments to the reserve mobilization bill; they would empower the president to "take such action as is necessary" to prevent the violation of the Monroe Doctrine in Cuba.¹⁹

"The Congressional head of steam on this is the most serious that we have had," National Security Affairs adviser McGeorge Bundy told the president. Bundy feared that the administration "may appear to be weak and indecisive." The president must speak out with "a very clear and aggressive explanation" of United States policy to establish that the Cuban problem was "within our control." Bundy opposed any congressional authorization to use American power unless it was stated in general terms like those in the Formosa Resolution (1955) or the Eisenhower Doctrine (1957). At his press conference on September 13, the president took Bundy's advice and opened with a formal statement: "If at any time the Communist buildup in Cuba were to endanger or interfere with our security in any way . . . or if Cuba should . . . become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies." Still, the Republicans pressed the attack, with Keating claiming that the short-range missile facilities in Cuba could be transformed into intermediate-range sites.²⁰

On September 29 the Senate adopted the Cuba Resolution expressing United States determination to use arms if necessary to prevent Cuban subversion or aggression in the hemisphere and the island's conversion into an externally supported military base endangering United States security. Backed by Democrats as consistent with the president's statement of September 13, the measure also passed the House

¹⁸ *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 665. The Senate approved the measure on September 13. The House passed it on September 24. Kennedy signed the bill into law on October 3.

¹⁹ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 333; *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 14, Sept. 11, 1962, pp. 19073–19075; Humphrey to James Reston, Sept. 17, 1962, box 23-J6-3B, Senatorial Files, Humphrey Papers; Republican Congressional Committee, "Cuban Issue," 9. For examples of Republican charges of Democratic appeasement over Cuba, see *ibid.*, 8–9; and *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 14, Sept. 11, 1962, p. 19003.

²⁰ McGeorge Bundy, "Memorandum on Cuba for the press conference," Sept. 13, 1962, box 48, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers (Kennedy Library); *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 674; "Selected Cuba Chronology—1962," Political Files, Keating Papers; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 334; Newsletter, Sept. 13, 1962, Cotton Paper; Republican Congressional Committee, "Cuban Issue," 9.



Senator William B. Keating using a Minuteman missile model as a pointer, January 13, 1963. *Kenneth B. Keating Papers. Courtesy University of Rochester Library, Rochester, New York.*

by a wide margin. Keating dismissed the resolution as "worthless" unless the United States followed it up with a "more decisive policy." Although Kentucky Sen. John Sherman Cooper voted for the resolution, he cautioned his Republican colleague not to use Cuba as "a political gambit."²¹

Political gambit it was, and the Republicans were successful in making Cuba a troublesome political issue for the Democrats, who were put in the unenviable position of seeming to be hiding something. Mail poured into politicians' office demanding forthright action against Cuba.²² In the Times Square subway station in New York City, a "Directomat" machine that gave Republican Sen. Jacob Javits views was punched most often during the last week of September for "What is the Javits Record on Cuba and Castro?" Professional polls showed that Cuba had grown into a prominent issue for the American electorate. Kennedy tried instead to stress domestic issues. In a campaign swing through the Midwest on October 5–7, the president barely mentioned foreign policy.²³

²¹ *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 15, Sept. 20, 1962, p. 20058; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 334–35; Press Release, Sept. 20, 1962, Speech Files, Keating Papers; Remarks, Sept. 20, 1962, box 551, Cooper Papers.

²² See, for example, Lee Metcalf Papers (Montana Historical Society, Helena).

²³ Press Release, Javits Campaign Headquarters, Sept. 30, 1962, ser. 1, box 28, Jacob Javits Papers (State University of New York, Stony Brook). Gallup polls asked: "What do you think is the most important problem facing

But Kennedy could not easily ignore Keating's major Senate speech of October 9. In that speech Keating boldly claimed that intermediate-range missiles, capable of striking targets in "the American heartland," had been installed in Cuba. Six launching pads were being prepared, he said. Did Keating know for sure? He could not have. He possessed no conclusive evidence about Soviet "offensive" missiles in Cuba. As Republican Sen. Bourke B. Hickenlooper of Iowa recalled: "I had the same information that Ken Keating had, but basically it came from Cuban refugees, and I couldn't depend upon its reliability or separate fact from wishful thinking."²⁴ Nor, of course, did anyone in the administration have such information—not even Keating's alleged informant or informants in the government. Although government officials had received in late September and early October reports from observers in Cuba, they reasonably concluded that such reportage was questionable and "soft."²⁵ *NOT ALL - BY OCT. 10 - SEE NOTE, MINN. DES MOINES REGISTER*

Actually, Keating and administration officials learned about Soviet surface-to-surface missiles in Cuba at just about the same time. On October 14 intelligence officials learned from photographs taken during a U-2 surveillance flight that such missiles were in Cuba. Had bad weather on October 11, 12, and 13 not prevented the U-2 aircraft from flying over Cuba, intelligence officials could have had hard, confirming evidence at just about the same time Keating was making his public case about intermediate-range missiles. United States officials had all along been monitoring (U-2 planes made runs over parts of Cuba on August 29, September 17, 26, and 29, and October 5 and 7) the flow and positioning of Soviet weapons. When they discovered the "offensive" missile sites in western Cuba, they acted vigorously against them, as they said they would if and when they received proof. Keating's "soft" data ultimately proved to be correct. But the president, recalled secretary of State Dean Rusk, needed more than "speculation, guesswork, fears"; he had to have "very clear and precise and hard information" that "offensive" weapons were in Cuba before he could confront the Soviets and rally other nations behind United States action. The president, it should be noted, never ordered

his country today?" In August only 2% mentioned Cuba. In late September 25% cited Cuba. In the poll conducted October 19-24, 26% mentioned Cuba. Gallup Organization polling data (Roper Center, Institute for Social Inquiry, University of Connecticut, Storrs). A September *Des Moines Register and Tribune* poll asked whether Cuba was a "serious threat" to American security; 81% answered "yes." IOWA 62-168, *ibid.* A *Minneapolis Tribune* poll of late September found that 78% thought Cuba a "serious threat" to the United States. Minn. 215, *ibid.* Once during his campaign swing, Kennedy criticized the Republicans for having "ignored" Latin America in the 1950s. *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 737.

²⁴ *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 17, Oct. 10, 1962, p. 22957; *ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1962, 22889; Bourke B. Hickenlooper to William P. Knowland, Jan. 2, 1963, box 29, Bourke B. Hickenlooper Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa).

²⁵ Mystery surrounds Kenneth B. Keating's sources, for the senator, who died in 1975, repeatedly refused to divulge them. He may have received information from Florida-based Cuban exiles and their organizations or from officers in the Department of Defense. Keating's papers at the University of Rochester provide very few clues, and other members of his staff, who communicated with Paterson by telephone or letter, have been unable or unwilling to provide details. See *U.S. News & World Report*, Nov. 19, 1962, p. 86; Kenneth B. Keating, "My Advance View of the Cuban Crisis," *Look*, Nov. 3, 1964, pp. 96, 99, 100, 102, 104, 106; Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 177-80; United Press International, release, Oct. 19, 1964, Keating Papers; *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 14, Aug. 31, 1962, pp. 18359-18361; and Robert R. McMillan, "A Look Back at Cuban Missile Crisis," *Newsday*, Oct. 14, 1983, p. 72.

specific U-2 flights to counter specific Republican criticisms; apparently he did not participate in selecting dates for flights before October 16 but, rather, approved decisions made by officials in the CIA and the Department of Defense.²⁶ *W.H.*

On October 16, the very day Kennedy was being shown the shocking U-2 photographs of sites for medium-range (1,100 miles) and intermediate range (2,200 miles) missiles, the chairman of the Republican National Committee tagged Cuba the dominant issue of the fall campaign—a "symbol of the tragic irresolution of the Administration." On the eve of the missile crisis, then, the Republicans seemed to have outmaneuvered the Democrats over Cuba, but not so much so, analysts and pollsters reported, to deny the Democrats an impressive showing in the forthcoming mid-term elections. By mid-October, in fact, monotonously repeated Republican accusations had lost some of their punch, press coverage of Cuba had decreased, and other events—Mississippi, Berlin, and an Organization of American States meeting—had diverted attention. Still, the new information discovered by the U-2 might boost the Republicans by demonstrating that they had been right all along. Kennedy saw political trouble ahead. "We've just elected Capehart in Indiana, and Ken Keating will probably be the next President of the United States," remarked Kennedy when he first saw the U-2 pictures.²⁷

if indeed "danger" emerged - certainly could be inferred
October 16-October 22 "primary" (not having to be established from previous).
has early warning problem.

From the presentation of the aerial photographs of missile sites in Cuba to the president on the morning of October 16 to Kennedy's nationally televised speech in the evening of October 22, a specially constituted group of advisers, later called the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the National Security Council, met frequently to debate courses of action. The options of invasion, bombing, blockade, and diplomacy were explored in exhausting sessions often marked by frank disagreement and changing minds. To what extent did the president and his top advisers think or talk politics during that tense week? Did "the political needs" of the administration compel it "to take almost any risk to get them [the missiles] out," as Kennedy's ambassador to India, John Kenneth Galbraith, later suggested?²⁸ Did political considerations shape the two key decisions? The chief decision was to quarantine Cuba to prevent further military shipments to the island and to impress the Soviets with the serious American intention of forcing the missiles out. The second major deci-

²⁶ Only the Sept. 5 and Oct. 14 flights covered the western portion of the island (where the Soviets were deploying the missiles), because United States officials feared a plane would be shot down by a surface-to-air missile. For a discussion of intelligence gathering from four sources—ships docking in Cuba, refugees, CIA agents in Cuba, U-2 flights—see Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 159-92. The U-2 flights were the most swift, accurate, and reliable. Intelligence data from a variety of sources, including U-2 flights, reached top-level officials such as Vice Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson. Col. Howard Burris, memoranda, box 6, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers; John A. McCone interview by Joe B. Frantz, Aug. 19, 1970, John A. McCone Oral History Interview, *ibid.*; Hilsman to Paterson, Dec. 12, 1984 (in Paterson's possession); "The Cuban Missile Crisis," cond. by Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (New York, N.Y.), Jan. 27, 1983, transcript of videotape (in Sloan Foundation's possession).

²⁷ *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1962, pp. 1, 24; Montague Kern, Patricia W. Levering, and Ralph B. Levering, *The Kennedy Crises: The Press, the Presidency and Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, 1983), 117-22; O'Donnell and Powers with McCarthy, *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye*, 310.

²⁸ Steel, "Endgame," 15.

** * * (this group) didn't discuss Kennedy, did it?*
NO THOUGHT.
TO NEW CREDIT HE WASN'T PREPARED TO BE SEEN THINKING - RKE. YOU WOULD SEE - was he afraid to think, take some

ion was tactical: to inform the Soviets of United States policy through a television address rather than through private negotiations or traditional diplomatic channels.

The several sources for October 16–22 available to the scholar reveal some discussion of politics within the small circle of presidential advisers. Yet the transcripts of the two meetings of October 16, Sorensen's private papers, National Security Council documents, a postcrisis internal report, Defense Department briefings, former President Eisenhower's memoranda of conversation with Kennedy and CIA officials, notes or recollections of such legislative leaders as Sen. Richard B. Russell of Georgia, oral histories, memoirs, the president's appointment books and doodles," and other materials suggest that politics was very seldom discussed and did not determine the choice of the naval blockade.²⁹ Nor do the historical records indicate that the tactic of a surprise television address rather than a private advance warning was shaped by politics, although questions cloud this issue.

For many reasons Kennedy felt compelled to act decisively against the Soviet emplacement of missiles in Cuba. First, he felt tricked, for the Soviets had told the United States on more than one occasion that they would not put into Cuba missiles that could reach the United States and that they would refrain from actions that might aggravate international tensions before the fall elections.³⁰ Second, Kennedy's long-standing Cold War posture and ardent desire to discipline or to remove Castro urged upon him a confrontationist policy, as did his tendency to personalize international contests and his need to prove his toughness and to win – evident in his October 16 comment on learning about the missiles that "he can't do that to me!"³¹ He was moved to act, too, by the appearance of a shift in the strategic balance of power and of a diminution of United States standing in Latin America, a traditional sphere of influence.³² Kennedy was, of course, also cognizant of his Repub-

²⁹ The October 16 transcripts ("Kennedy tapes"), National Security Council minutes, Sorensen's papers, various oral histories, Frank A. Sieverts' report, "The Cuban Crisis, 1962," and the president's appointment books and doodles" are in the Kennedy Library. Eisenhower's memoranda are in Post-Presidential Papers (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kans.). Richard B. Russell's notes of an October 22 meeting with Kennedy are in his papers at the University of Georgia. Briefings such as that of October 22 have been released to researchers by the Defense Department. Among the memoirs by participants are Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York, 1969); Sorensen, *Kennedy*; Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*; Dean Acheson, "Dean Acheson's Version of Robert Kennedy's Version of the Cuban Missile Affair," *Esquire*, 71 (Feb. 1969), 76–77, 44, 46; George V. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York, 1982); O'Donnell and Powers with McCarthy, *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye*; Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929–1969* (New York, 1973); Maxwell D. Taylor, *Words and Plowshares* (New York, 1972); and U. Alexis Johnson and Jef Olivarius McAllister, *The Right Hand of Power* (Englewood Cliffs, 1984).

³⁰ Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 667; Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 26; Stewart Alsop and Charles Bartlett, "In Time of Crisis," *Saturday Evening Post*, Dec. 8, 1962, p. 18; Chester Bowles, *Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life, 1941–1969* (New York, 1971), 418; Dincerstein, *Making of a Missile Crisis*, 181; Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 166; Thomas G. Paterson, "Bearing the Burden: A Critical Look at JFK's Foreign Policy," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 44 (Spring 1978), 193–212.

³¹ Quoted in Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 193. See also Paterson, "Bearing the Burden," 193–212; Garry Wills, *The Kennedy Imprisonment: A Meditation on Power* (Boston, 1983); James D. Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 293–343; Graham Allison, "Cuban Missiles and Kennedy Macho: New Evidence to Dispel the Myth," *Washington Monthly*, 4 (Oct. 1972), 14–19; Thomas M. Longar, "Personality and Decision-Making: John F. Kennedy in Four Crisis Decisions," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 2 (June 1969), 200–225.

³² Ball, *Past*, 289. Sorensen has noted that the strategic balance "would have been substantially altered in appearance; and in matters of national will and world leadership, as the President said later, such appearances con-

litan-induced public pledges to take resolute action against offensive weapons in Cuba. To the extent that presidents must always act in a political arena and to the extent that politics refers to the politician's desire to fulfill promises, politics demanded that Kennedy remove the missiles. But presidents have always enjoyed considerable freedom of action in the making of foreign policy, and, in this case, politics or anxiety over the congressional elections did not decide specific courses of action. On October 16 Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara appreciated the distinction between acting in general and acting in particular when he recognized that the administration had "a domestic political problem" on its hands because of previous presidential statements. Yet "we didn't say we'd go in . . . and kill them, we said we'd act. Well, how will we act?" McNamara, for one, preferred a blockade of Cuba instead of military options.³³

At the two ExCom meetings of October 16, there was scant political discussion. In the first meeting the advisers worried about keeping the news secret until they had decided on policy. Keating's name came up, prompting speculation about his sources of information. Should the Senator be interviewed to check out his data? The president thought Keating would prove unhelpful, and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy feared the senator would say "afterwards that we tried to . . . dun him." The participants in the meeting largely discussed the operational status of the missiles, alternatives for removing them, and Soviet motives.³⁴ Nowhere in the transcripts of the two October 16 meetings are there comments to the effect that the administration or the Democratic party would suffer in November or after if a certain decision, such as one for an air strike, was not made.

Politics was not adjourned, of course. While his advisers puzzled over policy, the president went on the campaign trail. Campaign plans had called for Kennedy to travel across the nation, especially on weekends in late September and October. Until October 20 Kennedy kept his political schedule; on that day, feigning a head cold, he canceled his politicking and returned to Washington. His speeches before then, as Harris had advised, recommended the election of Democrats to insure the passage of critical domestic legislation. Kennedy gave little attention to foreign policy and gave no hint of an impending crisis. He did not sound an international "time of peril" theme. He did not try to entice Republicans into statements they would find embarrassing after the missile crisis became public. In short, the president did not play politics with Cuba at three stops in Connecticut on October 17, or in Springfield, Illinois, Cleveland, and Chicago on October 19.³⁵

tribute to reality," Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 678. Kennedy said to his advisers on October 16: "It makes them look like they're coequal with us. . . . After all this is a political struggle as much as military." Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon added it would appear "We're scared of the Cubans." "Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba," 6:30–7:55 P.M., Oct. 16, 1962, Presidential Recordings transcript, pp. 14–15, 46 (Kennedy Library).

³³ "Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba," 6:30–7:55 P.M., Oct. 16, 1962, Presidential Recordings, transcript, p. 46 (Kennedy Library).

³⁴ "Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba," 11:50 A.M.–12:57 P.M., Oct. 16, 1962, Presidential Recordings, transcript, p. 19, 26, *ibid*.

³⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Memorandum to the President, Aug. 13, 1962, box 18, Subject File: Politicking, Schlesinger Papers; boxes 40–41, Speech Files, President's Office Files, *ibid*; O'Donnell and Powers with McCarthy, *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye*, 307; *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 695–804. Vice President Johnson, touring several

... during a crisis meeting, Secretary of the Treasury C. Douglas Dillon passed a handwritten note to Sorensen. "Have you considered the very real possibility," Dillon asked, "that if we allow Cuba to complete installation & operational readiness of missile bases, the next House of Representatives is likely to have a Republican majority? This would completely paralyze our ability to react sensibly & coherently to further Soviet advances." This curious document is one of the few time-of-crisis records that speak directly to the relationship between politics and decisions. It came from a *Republican* serving in a Democratic administration—a Republican who seemed strangely to favor a Republican defeat in November. Actually, Dillon was using the political argument only to move the advisers toward his hardline position that decisive military action must be taken against Cuba—a position that was losing ground to the option of a blockade. Dillon apparently concluded that the president was *not* thinking politically and that a political case would persuade him to accept the use of substantial military force. The president and his other aides, of course, may have pondered the impact of their decisions on the congressional elections, but neither their records nor their decisions demonstrate such. And they did not accept Dillon's recommendation for an air strike, which would have conceivably proved more attractive to voters than a quarantine, which held the potential of a drawn-out crisis, and which in itself could not prevent the continuing assembly of missile components already in Cuba. As Dillon knew, moreover, Kennedy had no intention of ever accepting operational missiles.³⁶ The question was never whether to act but, rather, when to take which action. *OR TRADE.*

Meanwhile, politicians not privy to the secret deliberations of the president's advisers continued to spar over Cuba. The Cuban issue, Kennedy remarked to Sorensen on October 20, was "very harmful to the Democrats," because it proved that the Republicans had been right. And whereas some critics would condemn the Democrats for having been "soft" on Communism and Castro, others would soon denounce them as a war party. Kennedy believed "that whichever way he turned it was politically damaging at home," Sorensen recalled. But on the next day, Eisenhower, having not yet been consulted or briefed by Kennedy officials but, like the press, perhaps sensing forthcoming momentous decisions regarding Cuba, quarreled with his party chairman's designation of Cuba as the dominant issue of the campaign. "I think that probably we have heard the last of it. At least I hope so."

AND SEE OCT 20

western states, did speak about ridding Cuba of Castro and the Soviets. But his speeches were probably prepared before October 16 and were not coordinated with missile crisis officials in Washington. Memorandum, n.d., Johnson Papers; Democratic National Committee News Release, "Honolulu Remarks of Lyndon B. Johnson," Oct. 21, 1962, Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, Johnson Papers.

³⁶ C. Douglas Dillon to Sorensen, Oct. 18, 1962, box 48, Sorensen Papers; Dillon to Paterson, March 13, 1981 (in Paterson's possession). For Kennedy's vow on October 18 that operational medium-range ballistic missiles in Cuba would not be permitted, see Frank A. Sieverts, "The Cuban Crisis, 1962," [1963], p. 48, box 49, National Security File (Kennedy Library).

³⁷ Officials of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) were working to counter the Republicans on the Cuban issue. They drafted a hard-hitting presidential speech on Cuba that proclaimed that Republican "fire-eaters" themselves had "helped Castro to power and floundered in a morass of indecision while Castro and his Red advisors won firm control of the island." Cuba was "a false issue in this campaign to divert attention from the real issues." On October 22, the day Kennedy was scheduled to deliver his televised address, Press Secretary Pierre Salinger

& C. E. Gilson knew this was not proper? forming mistake, 18 Oct 1962. ... of blockade was ... (and will to ...) was not ... with ...



President John F. Kennedy addressing the nation by television, October 22, 1962.

Courtesy John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

(Political calculation made later) 0800 AM 1100 PM OCT 16 - NEVER CHANGED, OR NEEDED DISCUSSION. NOT ALL CALCULATION.

On October 22 Washington throbbed with anticipation. At noon the White House had announced an important 7:00 P.M. presidential speech, and journalists had already determined that Cuba was the topic. Some twenty congressional leaders—Congress was not in session, and the members were campaigning or vacationing—were summoned to the nation's capital for a special meeting with the president. First, at 3:00 P.M., Kennedy convened the full National Security Council. Mentioning the "domestic aspects of the crisis," he told its members that he wanted "one song" sung "to make it clear that there was now no difference among his advisers as to the proper course to follow." Secretary Rusk stated that "if anyone thought our response was weak, they were wrong," for he expected a "flaming crisis." Rusk's comments suggest that some administration officials worried that critics

called DNC headquarters to "kill" the paper. "Kill," handwritten word on draft speech, n.d., box 681, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library). According to Sorensen, Kennedy said little about the political ramifications of the crisis during the crisis. Theodore Sorensen interview by Carl Kaysen, March 26, 1964, Theodore Sorensen Oral History Interview, transcript, pp. 64-66 (Kennedy Library). Eisenhower quoted in *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1962, pp. 1, 21.

BUT SEE PRES. REJECTION OF INITIAL POSITION OR MUN, NITEL, RUSK, TAYLOR, (GILBERT) ... IF YOU ASSUME IF INITIAL POS. WAS ... FOR NON ...

the danger of nuclear war, exhausted from the ordeal of decision making, fearful that some naval officer on patrol in the Caribbean might make a military mistake, wondering whether Castro might escalate tensions by seizing control of the missiles, and pressed by some advisers to act militarily because they believed the Russians were stalling, the president, not surprisingly, spent little time on political considerations. But he did work to reduce the partisanship over Cuba, hoping to create a national consensus. Not only would such unity at home signal Khrushchev that he could not count on exploiting divisions within the United States; it also would take the issue out of the congressional campaign.

For the most part, Republicans quickly endorsed the president's policy. As one Republican put it, Cuba was "dead for the duration." Keating allowed that the president "has taken Cuba out of politics." As much as they backed Kennedy's policy, however, Republicans also grumbled that the crisis was politically motivated. Some crowed that the president would not have acted had it not been for the opposition party's pressure, and others criticized the administration for not going all the way—getting rid of the Castro regime. Sorensen prepared a memorandum answering each of those complaints. On that which held that Kennedy was driven to act by politics, Sorensen's note answered with an emphatic "NO!"⁴²

In this period the administration sought to mold a popular, bipartisan consensus. The ExCom meeting of October 23 discussed the need for "unity on the home front." The release of low-level photographs of the missile sites "to prove to laymen [the] existence of missiles" might help, thought the Kennedy advisers. The president ordered his cabinet to cancel all campaign appearances. He called Eisenhower and urged Republicans not to make the Cuban crisis partisan. "I replied I was sure they wouldn't," recalled the former president. In another effort at bipartisanship, Kennedy sent the respected Republican public servant John J. McCloy to join Ambassador Adlai Stevenson at the United Nations. Republicans were brought into the foreign-policy discussions, Sorensen said, because "Republicans in and out of Congress would be much less likely to attack a McCloy or a [CIA Director John] McCone, McNamara or Dillon." The administration also provided regional State Department briefings for public officials of both parties in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Fort Worth, and San Francisco.⁴³

Nearly every account of the crisis quotes a discussion of October 24 between the president and his brother Robert, which the latter related in his memoir, *Thirteen Days*. At the time Soviet ships were heading toward the naval blockade; violent confrontation seemed possible. "It looks really mean, doesn't it," the president said.

⁴² *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1962, p. 18; *ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1962, p. 16; "Statement of Senator Cotton on President Kennedy's Speech on Cuba," Oct. 22, 1962, Cotton Papers; *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 27, 1962, pt. 1, p. 5; TCS [Sorensen], "GOP Charges That," memorandum, Oct. 28, 1962, box 48, Sorensen Papers.

⁴³ McGeorge Bundy, "Executive Committee Minutes, October 23, 1962, 10:00 A.M.," box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers; Lyndon B. Johnson, handwritten notes for ExCom meeting, 10:00 A.M., Oct. 23, 1962, *ibid.*; Malcolm Moos, "Interview with President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Gettysburg, Pa., Nov. 8, 1966," box 11, Post-Presidential Papers; Augusta, Ga., Eisenhower Papers; Sorensen interview, 69; *New York Times*, Oct. 21, 1962, pp. 1, 21.

"But, then, really there was no other choice. If they get this mean on this one it's our part of the world, what will they do on the next?" The attorney general replied "I just don't think there was any choice, and not only that, if you hadn't acted, you would have been impeached." The president agreed: "That's what I think—I would have been impeached."⁴⁴ Does that exchange demonstrate that the Kennedys acted to save themselves politically? Actually it demonstrates little, because President Kennedy intended to act, to force the missiles from Cuba, from the moment he learned about them. He never hesitated in that intention; thus impeachment for inaction was a farfetched notion. Assuming that the conversation occurred exactly as reported, it was an exaggeration perhaps induced by the tensions of the moment.

If the president engaged in political partisanship during this period, it was understated. On October 25, for example, he wrote a letter intended for public release to Gov. Gaylord A. Nelson of Wisconsin, who was running for the Senate against incumbent Republican Alexander I. Wiley. Kennedy apologized for having had to cancel his campaign trip to the Badger State, "because your election is important to the nation." Without specifically mentioning the missile crisis, he went on: "More than ever before, we need men in the United States Senate who have the judgment, imagination, courage and leadership to meet the critical tests confronting our country." Since there could have been no doubt about the nation's "critical test" at that moment, the letter amounted to a campaign document exploiting the Cuban crisis to help a Democrat. Yet this appears to be the only instance of presidential politicking during the tense days of October 23–28. Even Lyndon B. Johnson, the most political of politicians, jotted down nothing of a political nature during high-level meetings in that period.⁴⁵

October 29 to Election Day, November 6

From the time of the American-Soviet agreement to the day of the midterm elections, the politics of the Cuban question heated up again. Kennedy's actions had not removed the issue from the campaign, for Republicans once again tried to win favor at the polls by charging that Kennedy's Cuba policy had failed: Cuba remained a Soviet military ally; the Monroe Doctrine stood repudiated; Castro still sat atop a Communist regime, bent on subversion in Latin America; and one way of ousting both the Castroites and the Soviets from the island in the future—invasion—had been denied by presidential pledge. Furthermore, with Castro's obstruction of on-site inspection by United Nations officials, suspicions grew that the missiles were not being removed. Unsubstantiated stories circulated by Cuban exiles suggested that the missiles were being hidden in caves.⁴⁶ As of election day Kennedy could

⁴⁴ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 67.

⁴⁵ John F. Kennedy to Gaylord A. Nelson, Oct. 25, 1962, box 691, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); Johnson, handwritten notes, Oct. 23–26, box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers.

⁴⁶ Wallace F. Bennett to Kennedy, Nov. 1, 1962, box 47, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library). At the November 6, 1962 ExCom meeting, Kennedy called attention to such stories, which, he was told, were never substantiated. The president "asked that this fact be brought to the attention of appropriate news editors." "NSC Ex-

ould say that the quarantine was inadequate and that the Democrats were still too mid on Cuba. The president may have thought similarly when he entered the 5:00 M. legislative leaders' meeting to explain his ultimatum to the Soviets and the imposition of a naval blockade. The Republicans in the group proved conciliatory, but the Democrats, in a tense exchange with the president, urged military action. Senator Russell, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Senator Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, advocated an invasion of Cuba. Russell went further. He favored "knocking out" the missiles with "bombs and rockets." An annoyed Kennedy departed the meeting to get ready for his television address, uttering to Sorensen that "if they want this job, they can have it—it's no great job to me."³⁸

The president's advisers and most scholars have explained the choice of a television speech—a surprise public statement—to inform the Soviets as necessary to the success of United States policy. From the beginning Kennedy's aides discussed the usefulness of a public ultimatum—"a statement to the world." The question was timing: Should it be delivered without prior notice to the Soviet Union and Cuba, or should it follow diplomatic approaches to the two governments? ExCom on October 17 discussed the option of a diplomatic overture. One scenario included approaches to Nikita S. Khrushchev and Castro; they would be told of American plans to force the missiles out of Cuba, and if no satisfactory reply was received within forty-eight hours, Kennedy would go on television to announce the installation of the blockade. But in the end the president and his advisers decided to surprise the Soviets with a public address. They thought that Americans had to be told early because "no responsible President would have tried to mobilize the Navy for a quarantine without telling the American people exactly what he was doing." It was believed, too, that a dramatic media speech exposing Soviet perfidy would rally world opinion to United States policy. As well, ExCom members feared that Khrushchev himself might issue a "blustering ultimatum" and delay negotiations until all the missiles became operational. In other words, the "initiative" would shift to the Soviets.³⁹

Blockade would have been a better idea if it had been announced earlier. Sorensen would have been a better idea if it had been announced earlier.

* "Minutes of the 507th Meeting of the National Security Council on Monday, October 22, 1962, 3:00 P.M., Inner Room," box 313, National Security File (Kennedy Library); Neil MacNeil, *Dirksen: Portrait of a Public* (New York, 1970), 205-207; Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 53-54; Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 702-703. Russell and William Fulbright believed that an invasion would be less likely to lead to nuclear war with the Soviet Union use it would pit American soldiers against Cubans rather than against Russians, who might stand aside. "RBR a Notes," Special Presidential File, ser. 15, Oct. 1962, Richard B. Russell Papers (University of Georgia Library).
ns; *Congressional Record*, 93 Cong., 1 sess., pt. 31, vol. 119, Dec. 10, 1973, pp. 40353-40354.
* "Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba," 6:30-7:55 P.M., Oct. 16, 1962, p. 46 (Kennedy Library); Sorensen to Paterson, Dec. 13, 1984 (in Paterson's possession); Edwin M. Martin to Paterson, Jan. 14, 1985, *ibid.*; Ball to Paterson, Dec. 17, 1984, *ibid.*; U. Alexis Johnson to Paterson, Dec. 3, 1984, *ibid.*; Roswell L. Gilpatrick to Paterson, Dec. 28, 1984, *ibid.*; Dean Rusk to Paterson, March 30, 1984, *ibid.*; Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 201-202. It is difficult to understand the importance of "initiative" in this crisis. ExCom member Charles Bohlen, former ambassador to the Soviet Union, recommended on October 18 that "diplomatic action" be taken—that Kennedy communicate with Khrushchev "privately." Bohlen added, "I don't quite see the urgency of military action—if it leaks we have already initiated diplomatic action we should be able to handle it." Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 32. Indeed, United States military superiority in the region was never doubted, and any shift in initiative would have been short-lived. Adlai Stevenson also urged negotiations before taking public action. John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World: The Life of Adlai E. Stevenson* (Garden City, 1978), 721-23.

WHAT WAS THE POINT? WAS IT THAT BLOCKADE COULD HAVE BEEN A GOOD TO GO PUBLIC AS A FIRST APPROACH—PREVENTING BY IT LEAKS, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN A DISASTROUS RESULT?

One time when Kennedy conceivably could have issued the private warning was October 18, when the president met in the White House with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. The journalist Walter Lippmann published a widely read column of October 25 criticizing the president for suspending diplomacy—for not showing Gromyko the photographs and informing him that the United States would soon announce a policy to force the dismantling of the missiles. If Kennedy had discussed the issue with Gromyko, "the President would have given Mr. Khrushchev what all wise statesmen give their adversaries—the chance to save face." Kennedy later rebutted that by October 18 he had not yet settled on a policy, he did not have complete information from reconnaissance, and he "did not want to give him [Gromyko] the satisfaction of announcing what he was doing." Kennedy added: "This way we held the initiative." Moreover, Gromyko's prevarication in that meeting—that the Soviets would not place offensive missiles in Cuba—convinced some Kennedy officials that private diplomacy would not work.⁴⁰

Although little evidence is now available to sustain such an argument, it is plausible that the vehicle of a surprise, public television speech was selected for its anticipated domestic political impact.⁴¹ First, a dramatic speech announcing bold action would surely rally Americans around the Democratic administration. Second, a tough-minded speech would take the campaign issue away from the Republicans and possibly disarm critics who thought Kennedy pusillanimous toward Communism. Third, Kennedy might have reasoned that quiet, private negotiations could not have been conducted in secret for very long. The inevitable leaks would perpetuate charges that the administration was concealing information and underplaying the military threat. And even if the negotiations proved successful, Republicans would sneer that unsavory deals with the archenemy had been struck in secret or that opportunities for purging the Western Hemisphere of Castro and the Soviets had been squandered. Whatever the case, the speech's effect warmed Democrats, for the public response to the president's stand was positive.

(BELIEVED THAT WAS THE MAIN REASON)
DID N WORRY? OR IF DRUG? WHY DID IT SEEM MORE URGENT?
(WHAT IF SOVS REVEALED NOW ULT, '67—AND MADE COUNTERTHREAT?)

October 23–October 28
After his televised statement Kennedy and his aides waited anxiously for the Soviet response. The quarantine was put in place. Khrushchev and Kennedy exchanged letters, and Soviet officials met secretly with Americans in Washington. On October 28 the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw the missiles, and the United States promised not to invade Cuba in the future. That promise did not spring from domestic political calculations but from a desire to end a dangerous crisis. A pledge not to invade Cuba, after all, would hardly satisfy Republicans, who could be expected to argue in the 1964 presidential campaign that Kennedy had permitted the "Red menace" to remain in the Western Hemisphere. Still, during those hair-trigger

* Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston, 1980), 535; *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 199; U. Alexis Johnson to Paterson, Dec. 3, 1984.

* ExCom discussed the "political content" of the address. "Tentative Agenda for Off-the-Record NSC Meeting, October 21, 1962, 2:30 P.M.," box 313, National Security File (Kennedy Library).

WHAT WAS THE POINT? WAS IT THAT BLOCKADE COULD HAVE BEEN A GOOD TO GO PUBLIC AS A FIRST APPROACH—PREVENTING BY IT LEAKS, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN A DISASTROUS RESULT?

not unequivocally demonstrate that all the missiles had been shipped back to the Soviet Union. And to gather evidence of dismantling, American surveillance planes crossed Cuba, always with the risk of being shot down, as had happened once already, on October 27. Kennedy now approved such intelligence flights on a one-by-one basis, apprehensive of an attack that would inflame Cuban-Soviet-American relations, force him to retaliate, and spark war. The political damage at home would also be great, for it would seem to confirm Republican complaints that Kennedy had not really solved the Cuban problem. In this period the administration and Democratic leaders continued efforts to build a popular consensus, worked to reassure the public that the missiles were in fact departing, and sought to counter Republican "sniping."⁴⁷ As before October 16, American politics and Cuba became conspicuously intertwined.

President Kennedy must have grimaced when he read what Eisenhower said at a campaign rally in Syracuse, New York, on October 29. The former president had not long before urged that Cuba be taken out of the campaign, but now he turned partisan. Only Republican prodding, evident in the Cuba Resolution, he argued, had enabled Kennedy to act forcefully in the crisis. The next day several right-wing Americans organized the Committee for the Monroe Doctrine. Backed by some Republican congressmen, by pundits such as William F. Buckley, Jr., and by former military officers such as Adm. Arthur W. Radford, the committee protested that Kennedy had guaranteed a "Communist colony" in violation of the Monroe Doctrine's invocation against the extension of a foreign "system" into the Western Hemisphere. Other Republicans pressed the question. For example, Goldwater joined Rep. Bob Wilson, chairman of the House Republican campaign committee, to ask the president to abrogate the agreement with the Soviet Union. The no-invasion pledge, they complained, had "locked Castro and Communism into Latin America and thrown away the key to their removal." The *Chicago Tribune*, a staunchly Republican newspaper, ran a front-page cartoon showing a Democratic donkey holding a placard lettered "Read All about Cuba." A forlorn elephant remarks: "But only a couple of weeks ago, you were begging me not to mention the Cuban issue." The cartoon was titled "Last Minute Drive for Votes."⁴⁸

Did Kennedy and the Democrats use Cuba in a drive for votes during the last week of the campaign? They did, but they were puzzled about how to go about it without appearing to be crass. The Democratic National Committee prepared drafts of some "fairly rough speeches" on Cuba for candidates, but whether they were used is not clear. Kennedy sent letters meant for publication to candidates,

LAST MINUTE DRIVE FOR VOTES



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playing on the theme of the need for "men of strength" in "this hour of national crisis." From the beginning of the crisis, the White House had managed the news. The president restricted his advisers, telling those present at the ExCom meeting of October 30, for example, that all discussions with the press had to have his authorization. He wanted a consistent story to come out of the State and the Defense departments, and he also sought to prevent Cuban exiles from buying radio time to attack United States policy. As well, the president released aerial photo-

Executive Committee Record of Action, November 6, 1962, 6:15 P.M., Meeting No. 21," box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers.

⁴⁷ Samuel C. Brightman to Pierre Salinger, Oct. 31, 1962, box 47, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library).

⁴⁸ *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1962, pp. 1, 16; *ibid.*, Oct. 31, 1962, p. 19; Edward V. Rickenbacker to Sen. Jack Miller, Dec. 10, 1962, with attachments, box 145, Young Papers; Marvin Liebman to Rickenbacker, "Committee for the Monroe Doctrine: Report #1," memorandum, Nov. 5, 1962, box 65, Liebman Associates Papers (Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Calif.); *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 338; Republican Congressional Committee, "Cuban Issue," 14; Press Release, Nov. 1, 1962, Cotton Papers; *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 2, 1962, p. 1.



San Cristobal missile site shown in reconnaissance photograph of October 23, 1962, released on November 2, 1962.
Still Media Depository, United States Department of Defense, Washington, D.C.

graphs just three days before the election in order to prove the dismis-
 Soviet missile bases.⁴⁹

Kennedy's aides thought that a large voter turnout on November 6 would help the Democrats. But how could the administration induce voters to the polls without appearing to be crassly exploiting the missile crisis? Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman proposed that friendly commentators be encouraged to urge citizens to vote Democratic in "this hour of crisis" to demonstrate to the world national backing for the president's policy toward Cuba. A few days later Schlesinger advised the president to capitalize on the Cuban crisis by issuing a statement himself, "calling on the nation to show its gratitude for its democratic opportunities by voting in unprecedented numbers next Tuesday."⁵⁰

Advisers to the president discovered in the Advertising Council a way to arouse voter participation without their suffering the stigma of playing politics with foreign policy. Assistant to the President Timothy J. Reardon, Jr., suggested to the president of the Advertising Council, a business-funded nonprofit organization that produced advertisements deemed "in the public interest," that a heavy vote in November would indicate to the Soviets that Americans "in times of crisis" value "our free system of government." Reardon recommended a mass-media campaign. In response the council prepared several announcements and on October 29 sent them to every television and radio station in the United States. One of the sixty-second announcements read: "It is well to remind ourselves that these weeks of crisis do not mean the end of Communist threats to our security. *They will threaten us again.* . . . Let's show the Communists. Let's pile up the biggest vote in history." Two days later a similar advertisement was airmailed to 105 metropolitan daily newspapers. Pleased with the project, Press Secretary Pierre Salinger then asked the council to produce a one-minute film of former President Eisenhower's appealing for a large vote, to go along with a similar film, provided by the White House, of Kennedy's saying much the same. During the evening of November 2, the council air-expressed prints of both films to the major networks and 335 television stations; and it sent audiotapes of the messages to radio networks.⁵¹

Through that supposedly nonpartisan effort, the administration effectively linked the president's successful handling of the crisis with the elections. Yet analysts remained uncertain how the Cuban crisis would affect voters. Some speculated that

⁴⁹ "NSC Executive Committee Record of Action . . . Meeting No. 21," Johnson Papers; Kennedy to Edmund G. Brown, Oct. 31, 1962, box 47, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); "NSC Executive Committee Record of Action, October 30, 1962, 10:00 A.M., Meeting No. 13," box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers; Kern, Levering, and Levering, *Kennedy Crises*, 123-40; Press Release, Nov. 2, 1962, box 5, Schlesinger Papers; *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 821. Kennedy decided on November 5 not to release pictures or information gathered from aerial reconnaissance missions on November 4. "NSC Executive Record of Action, November 5, 1962, 10:00 A.M., Meeting No. 20," box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers.

⁵⁰ Orville Freeman to Robert F. Kennedy, Oct. 29, 1962, box 12, Attorney General's Personal Correspondence, Robert F. Kennedy Papers (Kennedy Library); Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Memorandum for the President, Nov. 1, 1962, box 5, Schlesinger Papers.

⁵¹ The Advertising Council estimated that about 35,000 television and radio messages were aired; at least 50 newspapers published the advertisement. T. S. Repplier to Broadcaster, Oct. 29, 1962, with attachments, box 693, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); Arthur M. Wilson to Timothy J. Reardon, Jr., Oct. 29, 1962, *ibid.*; T. J. Reardon, Jr., Memorandum for the President, Nov. 13, 1962, *ibid.*; Repplier to the President, Dec. 4, 1962, *ibid.*; Salinger to Repplier, Dec. 17, 1962, *ibid.*

out; some concluded that the crisis would help incumbents of both parties; still others wrote that the Democrats would benefit. Surely the Republican and the Democratic manipulations of the Cuban issue just before the elections aroused voter interest. November 6, 1962, marked the largest turnout of eligible voters (47 percent) in any midterm election since 1922.⁵²

Election Day, November 6: The Outcome of House and Senate Races

The elections of 1962 barely changed party alignment in the House. On the whole incumbents did well, and because most incumbents were Democrats, Democrats did well by the measurements of previous midterm elections. The Eighty-eighth Congress, elected on November 6, numbered 259 Democrats and 176 Republicans. The previous Congress was controlled by the Democrats, 263 to 174. Thus the Democrats lost only four seats, and the Republicans gained only two. Republican gains came in the South (5 seats); Democrats won 9 new seats in the West; in the Midwest the Democrats lost, but the Republicans made no gains; and in the East, both parties lost seats (see table 3).⁵³

Because so many incumbents were victorious, can the defeat of those Republican incumbents who lost be explained by Kennedy's handling of the missile crisis? Did the election results stem from voter reaction to the crisis? Domestic-policy issues, local political peculiarities, the nature of the 1960 election, the strength of the Democratic party in voter registration, reapportionment, and the ancient practice of gerrymandering—not the Cuban missile crisis—best explain the Republican party's failure to make significant gains in the House. In the nation as a whole, 206 representatives had to run in new or substantially altered districts. Reapportionment had allocated ten additional congressional districts to the West, and the Democrats won all but one of those new districts. Eight of the new districts were in California; Democrats won seven of them in large part because of a radical gerrymander.⁵⁴

In California, redistricting victimized three incumbent Republicans: John H. Rousselot, Edgar W. Hiestand, and Gordon L. McDonough. Rousselot, a first-term congressman and member of the John Birch Society, represented Richard M. Nixon's old district. After gerrymandering, this conservative Republican district was transformed, with the Democrats enjoying a 62 to 38 percent advantage in registered voters. Democratic State Assemblyman Ronald B. Cameron defeated Rousselot by winning 53.1 percent of the popular vote. Hiestand, another John Birch Society member, was a sixth-term congressman who lost to Everett G. Burkhalter of the Los Angeles City Commission. After the state legislature altered Hiestand's district, it had 37,000 more registered Democrats than Republicans. Burkhalter won with 52.1

⁵² *New York Times*, Oct. 26, Oct. 28, Oct. 30, 1962; Violet M. Gunther to Morris H. Rubin, Oct. 29, 1962, x 19, Americans for Democratic Action Papers (State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison); Matty Matthews, "1962 Senatorial Campaign Prospects," Nov. 2, 1962, box 23-G-4-2F, Senatorial Files, Humphrey Papers; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1047.

⁵³ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1034.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1034, 1062; Victor C. Ferkiss, "Our '4-Party' System," *Nation*, Dec. 1, 1962, p. 368.

TABLE 3
Party Division in the 87th and 88th Congresses
(By Geographic Section)

	East		South		Midwest		West		Nation	
87th Congress	129		120		129		59		437	
88th Congress	122		119		125		69		435	
87th Congress (by party)	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
	68	61	111	9	51	78	33	26	263	174
88th Congress (by party)	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
	65	57	105	14	47	78	42	27	259	176
Net Change by Party	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
	-3	-4	-6	+5	-4	-	+9	+1	-4	+2

SOURCE: *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962 (Washington, 1962), 1034.

percent of the vote. McDonough, an eighteen-year House veteran, suffered as well from the gerrymandering of his district. He found himself with a new district in downtown Los Angeles, politically inhospitable for a conservative Republican. The state assembly had given his opponent, Edward R. Roybal, a liberal on the Los Angeles City Commission, a Democratic lead of 47,000 registered voters. Roybal took 56.5 percent of the popular vote on November 6. Two other California districts were also tailored to meet the needs of the Democratic Assemblymen Charles H. Wilson and Richard T. Hanna, both of whom won House seats by comfortable margins.⁵⁵

Certainly the missile crisis affected voters in California and elsewhere in the West, but the intrusion of the crisis into the campaign season may not necessarily have helped Democrats. In the West both successful Republicans and successful Democrats had favored a strong stand against Cuba. In California's Eleventh District, for example, Democratic candidate William J. Keller lost badly to Rep. J. Arthur Younger. When he analyzed the outcome, Keller concluded that voters on the whole preferred incumbents, regardless of party. He also thought insufficient funds had hindered his campaign. But he fingered the Cuban missile crisis as a culprit in two ways. First, the briefing the administration gave to incumbents such as Younger "hurt," because it marked them as leaders. Second, the crisis caused the president to cancel his campaign visit to the Golden State. "We felt the campaign was hitting its stride until Cuba, then fell off and never recovered." On the other hand, the missile crisis may have set back Nixon's California gubernatorial candidacy. Elsewhere in the West, the Cuban crisis does not appear to have decided election results.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, Sept. 2, 1962, p. 26; *Time*, Nov. 16, 1962, pp. 23-25; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1034, 1046; *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections* (Washington, 1975), 846.

⁵⁶ Frank H. Jonas, "The 1962 Elections in the West," *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 384; Totton J. Anderson and Eugene C. Lee, "The 1962 Election in California," *ibid.*, 409; Royce D. Dalmatier, Clarence F.

in the Midwest, where the Democrats lost four seats and the Republicans gained none, redistricting and nonforeign-policy issues best explain electoral outcomes. Rep. Walter H. Judd of Minnesota, a prominent, conservative Republican spokesman on foreign policy and a twenty-year veteran of the House, had to seek reelection in an altered district. His district was changed to include all of Minneapolis, including the Democratic Farmer-Labor (DFL) party stronghold of North Minneapolis. On election day Judd carried his old precincts by 10,860 votes; but he lost the new precincts by 16,997 votes, and DFL candidate Donald M. Fraser defeated the incumbent.⁵⁷

In Michigan, too, the Cuban issue seems to have counted minimally. In an at-large election, Democrat Neil Staebler beat his Republican opponent largely on domestic issues. Kennedy's handling of the Cuban issue before and after the crisis produced mixed results, according to Staebler's postelection analysis. Before October 22 Staebler had opposed a naval blockade of Cuba, scolding his Republican rival for advocating one. Then, when Kennedy imposed a blockade, Staebler had to struggle to "minimize the damage" to his campaign. He believed that the Cuban crisis was "a very helpful emotional stimulant, arousing many more people to vote"; it meant "a net change in our favor" but not enough to have decided the election. In Michigan's Sixth District, the incumbent Republican candidate won, and domestic issues were preeminent; "the Cuban triumph" yielded very few votes for the Democrat.⁵⁸

Support for Kennedy's farm program proved lethal in 1962. In Kansas incumbents Robert Dole (Republican) and J. Floyd Breeding (Democrat) were pitted against one another in a new district. Breeding campaigned in support of the farm program; he not only lost to Dole—he also failed to carry twenty-one rural counties from his old district. In a new Illinois district, seven-term Rep. Peter F. Mack, Jr. (Democrat) was upended by Republican Paul Findley, another incumbent. Findley's active opposition to the farm bill apparently secured his victory. Overall in the nation every Republican incumbent from a farm district who sought reelection was victorious.⁵⁹

McIntosh, and Earl G. Waters, eds., *The Rumble of California Politics, 1848-1970* (New York, 1970), 347; William J. Keller to Charles Daley, Nov. 9, 1962, box 683, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); Hal Cruzan to Charles Daley, Nov. 9, 1962, *ibid.*; Alice Franklin Bryant to Kennedy, Oct. 11, Oct. 14, 1962, box 980, *ibid.* In Washington, for example, Democratic candidate Alice Franklin Bryant lost very badly to Republican Congressman Thomas M. Pelly. Probably her image as a "peace candidate" lost her many votes. *Ibid.* In Montana, both incumbent Congressmen won—one a Democrat and the other a Republican, and Cuba was only one of many issues. In the First District, successful liberal Arnold Olsen ran on a platform of support for Kennedy's domestic legislation. In the Second District, conservative Republican James Battin targeted Kennedy's farm program. A post-election report on Battin's victory did not mention Cuba. Thomas Payne, "The 1962 Election in Montana," *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 441-42; "Memorandum on Second Congressional District of Montana," n.d., box 686, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library).

⁵⁷ *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 16, 1962, p. 4; *ibid.*, Oct. 28, 1962, Upper Midwest Sec., pp. 1, 5; *Congressional Quarterly Guide to U.S. Elections*, 847.

⁵⁸ Neil Staebler earned 52% of the popular vote to Alvin Bentley's 47.9%. *Congressional Quarterly Guide to U.S. Elections*, 847; Neil Staebler to John F. Kennedy, Nov. 17, 1962, box 686, White House Central File (Kennedy Library). In the Sixth District Republican Charles E. Chamberlain beat Democrat Don Hayworth. "Report on the Sixth District of Michigan Congressional Campaign," n.d., box 686, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1046; *Time*, Nov. 16, 1962, p. 23; "Whose Victory Was It?" *New Republic*, Nov. 17, 1962, pp. 5-6.

opposition to Kennedy's civil rights advocacy and to the Meredith episode in Mississippi. Votes for Republican candidates surpassed previous levels throughout the region. Reapportionment may also explain the results. Seven southern states suffered an attrition of eight seats in the national redistribution, and all those seats were Democratic; but Florida gained four seats, Maryland one, and Texas one. Republicans won three of the six new seats. They also gained one seat each in West Virginia and North Carolina, where reapportionment matched incumbents in redrawn districts. In both cases Democratic-controlled gerrymanders backfired.⁶⁰ Finally, in the East, as elsewhere, the Cuban crisis was but one of several influences on voters choosing members of the House.

As for the Senate races, five incumbent senators were defeated in 1962—three Republicans and two Democrats. Republicans Capehart of Indiana and Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin lost for reasons not directly related to the Cuban issue. If anything, the missile crisis may have helped both to better showings. The defeat of the third Republican, Joe H. Bottum of South Dakota, was due to a combination of factors, only one of which was the Soviet-American confrontation over Cuba. The incumbent Democrat who lost in Wyoming—J. J. Hickey—was victimized by his own hand. He was actually an interim senator who had resigned the governorship to be appointed to the national position. The public resented his self-serving tactic. A heart attack, moreover, trimmed Hickey's campaign schedule. His opponent, former Gov. Milward L. Simpson, was a popular figure who campaigned on a states' rights, anti-Communist, be-tough-with-Cuba platform that also included rejection of Medicare. Personalities rather than issues probably decided the election.⁶¹ The other incumbent Democrat to lose was Sen. John A. Carroll of Colorado. The Republicans swept the state in 1962, pushing Rep. Peter H. Dominick past Carroll. Although Dominick had hammered Carroll for not having earlier taken a hard stand against the Soviet military buildup in Cuba and although Carroll had tagged his opponent a "junior warhawk," public dissatisfaction with long-term Democratic control of state politics and perhaps anti-Catholic bias decided the election.⁶²

A closer look at the losses of the Republican incumbents reveals that while Cuba was an issue other issues counted as much or more. Bottum's loss in South Dakota owed a great deal to state politics. When Republican Sen. Francis Case died in June 1962, the governor turned the choice of a successor over to the central committee of the Republican party. Many candidates vied for the position, and after a rancorous meeting lasting ten hours, Bottum won the interim seat and was duly appointed. The Republican party was rife with squabbling factions, and Bottum, who had a reputation as a "hatchet man" for his party, proved a weak and vulnerable candidate.

⁶⁰ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1031-1034, 1062.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1038; Charles Beall, "The 1962 Election in Wyoming," *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 478; *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1962, p. 13; Sen. Maurine B. Neuberger of Oregon campaigned for J. J. Hickey but knew he was "unsalvageable." Maurine B. Neuberger to Wayne Morse, Nov. 20, 1962, box 120, ser. B, Wayne Morse Papers (University of Oregon Library, Eugene).

⁶² Democrats had held the governorship since 1954, and John A. Carroll's wife was Catholic. The religious issue had also been apparent in Colorado in 1960. *Denver Post*, Nov. 5, 1962, p. 3; Curtis Martin, "The 1962 Election in Colorado," *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 421-25; Jonas, "The 1962 Elections in the West," 377.

Further complicating Bottum's chances was an allegation that he and his wife were alcoholics—a charge Bottum seemed to substantiate through a tear-filled public denial. George McGovern also ran an effective campaign, which included a Charles Guggenheim film, *The Dakota Story*. This masterful piece of propaganda depicted McGovern as courageous (World War II battle scenes), God-fearing (old family church footage), educated (student and professor), and patriotic (Food for Peace director who combatted Communism). With a substantial lead at the beginning, Bottum slipped in the polls before the Cuban missile crisis. By election day McGovern had taken the lead, helped in part by Kennedy's handling of the crisis. "His people," Schlesinger reported to the president before the election, "feel that Cuba has played a big role in this shift."⁶³

The most conspicuous incumbent to lose in 1962 was Republican Senator Capehart. He, more than anyone else seeking reelection, had spoken to the Cuban issue. The president campaigned in the Hoosier State for the Democratic candidate Birch E. Bayh, Jr., a state representative. The White House also asked Louis Harris to conduct an intensive survey of Indiana voters. Harris discovered that Capehart's lead over Bayh was modest in the early stages of the campaign, despite the fact that Capehart was a three-term incumbent with name recognition. Harris learned too that Capehart evoked little enthusiasm among the electorate. Many voters found Capehart weak and indecisive, "a wind-bag, and playing politics too much." Capehart, moreover, had a negative rating on taxes, Medicare, unemployment, and inflation. Some complained about the senator's "intemperate views on going to war with Cuba," but in the Harris poll only 1 percent of his constituents saw Cuba as the paramount issue of the campaign even though Capehart tried to make it such. Bayh won just 50.3 percent of the vote. It does not appear that voters turned Capehart out because of his stand on Cuba or because of the president's stewardship of the crisis, but because Capehart failed to establish a positive image on the issues and as a personality against a young, energetic candidate who ran a high-exposure campaign. The Cuban missile crisis may have actually helped Capehart because it permitted him to use the "I was right all along" refrain.⁶⁴

Age, asperity, and the issue of Medicare best explain the defeat of the dean of Republican senators, Wiley of Wisconsin. Wiley was seventy-eight years old and seeking a fifth term. His Democratic challenger, Gov. Gaylord A. Nelson, who was forty-six, made age an issue. Throughout the campaign Wiley displayed a grumpy explosiveness and carelessness. Medicare and drug control, he said, were "pipsqueak issues." In early October a reporter asked him whether he had changed his opposition to Medicare. The senator shot back: "Keep your damn nose out of my business

and I'll keep my nose out of yours." When the reporter rose later to ask another question, Wiley boomed: "Keep your mouth shut." About two weeks later Wiley told reporters before a press conference that he wanted questions "without any nigger in the woodpile," and he shouted down still another reporter. Wiley apologized, but his style antagonized many. The *Burlington Standard-Press*, a conservative Republican newspaper, abandoned Wiley and endorsed Nelson.⁶⁵ Without doubt Nelson's greatest asset was his opponent.

Before the missile crisis Nelson believed he had Wiley "on the run," in part because Congress had recessed and Wiley had come home to display his offensive style. But then the Cuban missile crisis intruded. Nelson feared it set back his campaign. First, the president canceled a scheduled trip to Wisconsin. Second, as Nelson noted at the time, "it has removed Wiley from the state just when his true character was becoming apparent to the voters." And, third, because Wiley was called to Washington to meet with Kennedy on October 22, the crisis "portrayed him as one of sixteen Congressional leaders upon whom the President counts." One of Nelson's close associates remarked: "This [Cuba] was no break for us." Nelson quickly applauded the quarantine and tried to contrast the president's (and Nelson's) "statesmanship" with Wiley's "slogans without meaning." But Wiley claimed headlines, making much of his supposed importance during the crisis. One press release read: "Re-called to Washington by the President for consultation on the Cuban situation, Senator Wiley also has been conferring with top defense and intelligence officials." The Cuban missile crisis may have reinvigorated Wiley's campaign, but Democrat Nelson won nonetheless with 52.6 percent of the vote.⁶⁶ The president's handling of the crisis, then, actually boosted a Republican—just as Kennedy had feared might happen.

In other senatorial contests the influence of the Cuban issue varied. In New Hampshire a fractured Republican party permitted Thomas J. McIntyre to become his state's first Democratic senator since 1932. In Idaho the two incumbents, Democrat Frank Church and Republican Leonard B. Jordan won. Jordan beat Rep. Gracie Most even though her record on foreign and domestic issues was similar to Church's. The Cuban issue was not decisive in the results. In Utah it was only one of several issues, but Republican incumbent Wallace F. Bennett, who had urged a blockade and war against Cuba before the missile crisis, exploited his initiative on the Cuban issue, and it may have helped him. In South Carolina local Democrats believed that the missile crisis augmented Sen. Olin D. Johnston's vote count by diverting attention from the Mississippi controversy. As Johnston told the president by telephone in the midst of the missile crisis, "Your stand . . . meant a lot to our party down

⁶³ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Good News from South Dakota," Memorandum for the President, Nov. 2, 1962, box 652, Staff Memoranda—Schlesinger, President's Office File (Kennedy Library); Robert S. Anson, *McGovern: A Biography* (New York, 1972), 121–26; George S. McGovern, *Grassroots* (New York, 1977), 89–91; *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1962, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., "The Race for United States Senator—Indiana," n.d., box 105, Subject, President's Office File (Kennedy Library); Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, 18; *New York Times*, Sept. 1, 1962, p. 1; *ibid.*, Oct. 14, 1962, pp. 1, 43; *ibid.*, Oct. 29, 1962, p. 20; *Time*, Nov. 16, 1962, p. 26; *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 4, 1962, sec. G, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Milwaukee Journal*, Oct. 16, Oct. 9, Oct. 21, 1962; *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1962, pt. 1, p. 6. For criticisms of Alexander Wiley, see also *Sheboygan Press*, Oct. 16, 1962; and *Janesville [Wisconsin] Daily Gazette*, Oct. 11, 1962.

⁶⁶ Gaylord A. Nelson to Humphrey, Oct. 23, 1962, box 691, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); *LaCrosse Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1962; campaign tape recording, 1962, box 208, Gaylord A. Nelson Papers (State Historical Society of Wisconsin); Press Release, Oct. 27, 1962, box 18, Alexander I. Wiley Papers, *ibid.* For the Nelson-Wiley contest, see also *Milwaukee Tribune*, Oct. 26, Oct. 28, 1962; *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1962, pt. 1, p. 6; *Milwaukee Journal*, Oct. 28, 1962; *Time*, Nov. 16, 1962, p. 26; and *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1962, p. 4B.

there—brought the people together.” Johnston’s drawing of 57.2 percent of the vote, however, suggests that he had the election well in hand before the Cuban crisis. Finally, to cite another senatorial contest, incumbent Republican Dirksen, Senate minority leader, defeated Democratic Rep. Sidney R. Yates in Illinois. Dirksen was one of the leaders the president had called to Washington. But by then the senator’s reelection seemed certain, and Kennedy had given only lukewarm support to Yates. The state’s other senator, Democrat Paul H. Douglas, concluded that Dirksen and Kennedy had essentially struck a bargain wherein the president would not work to unseat the senator. At one point during the missile crisis, Kennedy had remarked personally to Dirksen that he did not need to campaign. “You’re just as good as in.” The press had picked up this bit of news, speculating that Kennedy had written off a member of his own party.⁶⁷

A familiar theory holds that voters tend not to favor newcomers in times of crisis. To the extent that this is true, the Cuban missile crisis benefited Senate and House incumbents—and 1962 was a good year for incumbents. As Republican Rep. Thomas B. Curtis of Missouri later explained, the missile showdown “gave all the incumbents running for reelection a great build-up. We were important. . . . This is what saved the Democrat controlled Congress, the great plus given to incumbents. Of course, Republican incumbents got the same benefit, but we were in the minority and we stayed in the minority.”⁶⁸ But the proposition that voters prefer not to change leaders in moments of crisis does not adequately explain the complexity of the 1962 election. Many of the losers of both parties were Washington veterans (Judd, Capehart, Wiley, Yates, Pfoz, Rousselot, Hiestand, McDonough, and Carroll, among others). And some of the winners were newcomers to national office (Bayh, McIntyre, Nelson, and Simpson, among others). In some cases, moreover, such as in North Carolina and Kansas, congressional reapportionment had paired incumbents against one another in new districts, ensuring the defeat of some.

The effects of the Cuban missile crisis seem indiscriminate. The crisis helped some Democrats and hurt some Democrats; it buoyed some Republicans and weakened some Republicans. In many instances Cuba was not even a conspicuous campaign issue. The historian cannot identify one election in 1962 decided by voter reaction to the missile crisis—not a single outcome where the Cuban issue made the difference between victory and defeat. The results of the House and the Senate races, in other words, are best explained by the mix of other factors discussed in this article: personalities and their public images; local politics; domestic issues; reapportionment and gerrymandering; superior Democratic party registration; and the nature of the 1960 election.

Kennedy did not engage Cuba and the Soviet Union in the missile crisis in Oc-

tober in order to silence his noisy Republican critics or to attract votes for Democrats in November. As Kennedy knew before October 16, the Democrats already enjoyed a formidable position in the elections. Republicans had taken the initiative on Cuba through their constant scolding of the administration, but they had not persuaded voters to dump Democrats. The Democrats had no political need to manufacture a war scare, and Kennedy did not welcome a new Cuban crisis. From October 11 to October 22, Kennedy’s choice of the quarantine was not dictated by politics, although the tactic of the television address may have been. From the alarmist speech to the fading of the crisis on October 28, Kennedy ruminated about the political effects of the imbroglio, but, again, his decisions did not reflect a partisan stance. He did not, for example, shift from the potentially unworkable and slow-paced quarantine to immediate and decisive military action. From October 28, when Khrushchev capitulated to Kennedy’s ultimatum, to the election on November 6 both Republicans and Democrats exploited Cuba for political advantage. Neither party, it seems, particularly profited from the Cuban missile crisis on election day. The politics of the Cuban issue in the fall of 1962 was spirited and acrimonious but had limited impact on either the president’s momentous decisions after the secret debate in Washington or the voter’s decisions after entering polling places in every district in the United States.

As for what did shape President Kennedy’s decisions in the Cuban missile crisis, scholars will find the answers, as they have already begun to do, in the study of his personality traits, calculations of national security and hemispheric hegemony, and perceptions of international power, prestige, and credibility.

⁶⁷ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1032; William O. Lewis, “The 1962 Election in Idaho,” *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 433–34; Stewart L. Grow, “The 1962 Election in Utah,” *ibid.*, 465; Robert L. Stoddard to Kennedy, Nov. 13, 1962, box 47, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); Olin D. Johnston telephone call to Kennedy, memorandum, Oct. 26, 1962, box 155, President’s Office File (Kennedy Library); Paul H. Douglas, *In the Fullness of Time: The Memoirs of Paul H. Douglas* (New York, 1972), 573–75; MacNeil, *Dirksen*, 205–206.

⁶⁸ Thomas B. Curtis to Paterson, Feb. 13, 1984 (in Paterson’s possession).

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July 20, 1990

(The memo:
1992)

Notes on Thomas G. Paterson and William J. Brophy, "November Elections: The Cuban Missile Crisis and American Politics, 1962"

(notes starting here with section "October 23-28")

Why was CII a "nuclear crisis"? Why have most observers believed that it brought the world measurably nearer to the nuclear brink than any other episode?

Not because it reduced the "critical risk" significantly for either side (though with larger numbers of missiles in Cuba it would have done this!) I.e., it did not dispose either side to be more likely or willing to launch a deliberate preemptive attack upon a given degree of belief that the other might otherwise strike first. Nor did it increase the likelihood for either that the other might launch a deliberate aggressive first strike.

Looking toward the later stages of possible escalation, it did increase the likelihood of circumstances in which one side's expectation of a preemptive escalation by the other would increase: hence, its own inclination to preempt. Even though both leaders were, evidently, determined not to let matters escalate so far, they might have found themselves (or others) taking decisions to escalate despite and in contradiction to this earlier intent, as body-counts and political stakes mounted. This was a risk they consciously accepted as they let days pass without reaching a settlement, or even, at first, without proposing terms.

But another risk of nuclear initiatives was posed in the earlier stages of escalation, at the point of US attacks on Cuba: the risk, not of deliberate nuclear response ordered by Khrushchev but of unauthorized action by a lower missile commander in Cuba, on the order of the actual SAM firing.

This risk was real (as the SAM example shows) and was probably consciously posed by Khrushchev: on the precise analogy of the threat posed by short-range nuclear NATO weapons in Europe. Moreover, it was perceived and taken seriously by McNamara and, he says, Kennedy. (And Taylor, it would seem).

Effective as it was as a deterrent, it seems clear that the deterrence so constructed was not absolute. High-level advisors in the US, both military and civilian, urged attack on the missiles despite this risk, and expected such attack to be ordered eventually if the missiles were not withdrawn. Even advisors aware of the President's strong desire to avoid this decision, like Sorensen, were not at all certain that he could ultimately resist pressure to attack if satisfactory terms were not achieved.

Thus Krushchev's strategy of putting nuclear missiles into an area threatened with imminent, short-range attack--for the purpose of deterring such an attack, but without assurance that this move was sure to deter rather than to provoke attack--was outrageously reckless. Just as US nuclear first-use strategy and deployment in Europe was historically, monumentally, unforgiveably reckless.

last
time more
(factual)

Paterson and Brophy's flat conclusion that "Kennedy did not engage Cuba and the Soviet Union in the missile crisis in October in order to silence his noisy Republican critics or to attract votes for Democrats in November" (last two pages) is unsupported by their analysis.

Given that the Soviet missiles were known to be there by October 16 and that their presence would become known to the public before the election, the authors simply fail to address the key question: As of October 16, what did Kennedy believe the domestic political consequences for himself and his party would be--not only on and before November 6, 1962 but in subsequent months and in November 1964--if he failed to take immediate action at least as aggressive and dangerous as a blockade of Soviet shipping?

As it happens, Robert Kennedy gives a precise answer to that question, one which the authors actually cite but immediately, illogically discount.

Nearly every account of the crisis quotes a discussion of October 24 between the president and his brother Robert, which the latter related in his memoir, Thirteen Days. At the time Soviet ships were heading toward the naval blockade; violent confrontation seemed possible. "It looks really mean, doesn't it," the president said. "But then, really there was no other choice. If they get this mean on this one in our part of the world, what will they do on the next?" The attorney general replied: "I just don't think there was any choice, and not only that, if you hadn't acted, you would have been impeached." The president agreed: "That's what I think--I would have been impeached." Does that exchange demonstrate that the Kennedys acted to save themselves politically? Actually, it demonstrates little, because President Kennedy intended to act, to force the missile from Cuba, from the moment he learned about them. He never hesitated in that intention; thus impeachment for inaction was a farfetched notion. Assuming that the conversation

occurred exactly as reported, it was an exaggeration perhaps induced by the tensions of the moment.

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 But the obvious question at issue here is, why did Kennedy decide against inaction in the first place, when he heard about the missiles? The authors seem to assume that politics played no part in this decision, even though all the reasons for expecting inaction to lead to impeachment--a political calculation that clearly encompasses and surpasses expectations of election setbacks in 1962 and 1964--were just as obvious on October 16 as a week later.

The authors also emphasize that Kennedy had showed his intention to act aggressively very quickly, "from the moment he learned" about the missiles, and "never hesitated." They imply that no real "decision" against inaction was or needed to be made, there was no explicit calculation of any sort bearing on this "non-choice," inaction was a "non-option," so far from Presidential consideration that its very possibility was a "farfetched notion."

But again, why did Kennedy move in this direction, so quickly? The fast, instinctive reaction hardly, by itself, proves or even suggests the absence of domestic political considerations--if anything, the contrary. The prospect of being impeached in a fortnight can be expected to concentrate the mind of a President and his political-manager brother wonderfully.

Probably the authors are ensnared by the general belief that nonpolitical strategic considerations had been sufficient to produce a unanimous consensus to the same effect, just as quickly, among all the President's top advisors, including those who had no responsibility, experience of or instinct for domestic politics. The President's framing of the relevant alternatives is then inferred to be of a piece with theirs, or even to derive from their non-political perceptions and recommendations.

But this belief, reflected in virtually all accounts of the crisis, happens to be wrong. Among the President's advisors, inaction with respect to violent threats against Cuba or Soviet forces was not only a live option for several of them when they first heard of the missiles, but it seemed probably optimal, the most appropriate, prudent and perhaps legitimate course. This was the immediate response of Paul Nitze and (according to Nitze) Dean Rusk; and it remained the view of the President's principal advisor on national security, Secretary McNamara, with some support from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maxwell Taylor, for some period even after the President had made his contrary view known (which settled matters for most of the rest).

If domestic politics came to bear--and it is hard to imagine that it would not, if the stakes seemed as high as impeachment (in

comparison to which, consideration of a Congressional election, the focus of the authors' inquiry, seems a straw man)--it would first and perhaps most importantly ^{have} been at the point of deciding that "something had to be done," on first hearing the news. Something aggressive, violent, dangerous, humiliating to Khrushchev: to pay him back ^{publicly} for the insult of the secret deployment in the face of warnings, to restore Kennedy's dignity and his machismo, his image of manly risk-taking, determination, defiance of legal restraint, dangerous unpredictability ("not a man to be taken for granted, written off"). A reprisal, a revenge.

This would have its irreducible dangers: without the reality of these, no restoration of image.

(A macho image, of course, is not only a matter of personal preference or style to a president in the Cold War era: it is an asset, virtually a requirement of the job, in the theater of the Cold War, as the rules of the game--or, the roles of the play--were defined to the public and acted out. Not only Kennedy but his observers and rivals could be expected to identify a loss of this presidential image with a setback for the US, a weakening of US ability to safeguard "its interests," as these in turn were defined by the US Establishment.

And anything that encouraged "encroachment" upon these interests by the Soviets, or made American elites feel impelled to take forceful countermeasures, posed risks of war and nuclear crisis that affected all Americans, indeed all humans. Thus, most members of the ExCom probably did not agree with McNamara's immediate assessment that the stakes were only domestic political: appearances were seen to matter substantially, including appearances as to the President's character. McNamara himself may have been convinced of this; though the question still remained for him just how great a level of risk was justified under these circumstances.)

The dangers of a blockade were real despite Kennedy's determination to control them as much as possible and what may have been his secret determination (a major tentative finding of my investigation) not to go beyond this measure to actions that would have been even more dangerous. These were the dangers the Kennedys were confronting imminently on Wednesday morning as Soviet ships pressed on toward the blockade line, provoking their self-reassuring reflections that there had been "no choice" (i.e., they were not really responsible for the ominous uncertainties they were facing or for the worse that might follow).

But there had been a choice. The alternatives of either accepting the presence of the missiles or of bargaining them out (in the absence of US threats of violent, illegal action) were not only present in the minds of major US officials but had high-level proponents.

Even a real prospect of impeachment would not really foreclose the issue, with stakes as high as this. (Kennedy's own Profiles in Courage had described examples of Congressional courage selected and defined precisely on the basis of the politician's willingness to risk his political future by acting against the strong wishes of powerful constituencies that he represented).

I believe myself that Kennedy would probably not have taken the risks of acting as he did if he had seen the risks of inaction as exclusively personal and political. His perception of security stakes for the national as a whole and its alliances was not just self-serving; anyone educated in and accepting the premises of the Cold War ideology--such as me and all my colleagues--would have seen these stakes and risks. Moreover, in this case these assessments still do not seem entirely unjustified, looking back almost thirty years. They had to do with the likelihood that a passive acquiescence in this particular Soviet move--considering its location and precursors--would lead promptly to even more serious challenges elsewhere, one of which would be likely to trigger major war under circumstances less promising and more dangerous than the current ones.

All the "lessons of Munich" and the analogies with the Thirties that haunted Cold War memories and discussions came to bear here. As I had said about the Berlin crisis in my Lowell Lectures three years earlier, the problem was not (as Khrushchev himself pointed out) that Khrushchev was like Hitler; the danger was, I believed, that under certain conditions of the strategic balance (the then-feared, though imaginary "missile gap") and certain types of external encouragement and internal pressures, he might become like Hitler, in his risk-taking.

My concern may have been exaggerated, but it still does not seem to me to have been wholly illusory. Certainly in 1962 the unexpected news of his challenge in the Caribbean appeared to me as confirmation of the validity of my fears in 1959.

This is the meaning of Kennedy's observation: "It looks really mean, doesn't it...But then, really there was no other choice. If they get this mean on this one in our part of the world, what will they do on the next?" That is, if the Soviets succeeded--without evoking a forceful challenge from the US--in moving against US desires in a region where the US Government traditionally felt that its wishes should be law, in the face of Presidential warnings backed up by, or virtually compelled by, public and Congressional pressure, then what might they not try next, in an area where international stakes as seen by the President and his allies might be even higher (Berlin or elsewhere) but the tradition of and domestic political support for US intervention less obvious?

[See fear of Munich--Prague--Poland syndrome. Fear that 1) the adversary will wishfully estimate the risks of our reaction to the next challenge only on the precedent of an "appeasing" backdown this time, not taking into account that this humiliation may create political pressures and personal commitments that make a backdown less likely in the future, even though the odds and stakes look less favorable in the next confrontation; 2) fear that the latter dynamic will really operate at home: that a humiliating backdown now will dispose the electorate to press for, and the leaders to undertake, a later commitment that is truly imprudent, reckless, one that ought to be avoided especially in the circumstances created by the first backdown (including a worsening of the terms of confrontation and the encouragement of the adversary's hopes and demoralization of one's allies); 3) fear that the first two effects will combine to produce an explosion even more serious than was likely to result from a violent confrontation instead of the initial backdown.

The least familiar part of this calculation is the second stage. It has two aspects. The first is an historically-based fear of one's own political system, of the "reckless, irrational" response of both leaders and the electorate to a defeat, a humiliation, a failed act of "appeasement" or compromise. This elite, rather esoteric concern (rarely mentioned publicly) has among other bases a little-discussed historical referent. I recall several discussions with historically-aware members of the national security establishment who expressed the judgment that Chamberlain's gratuitous guarantee of Polish security (not based on a prior treaty or alliance) had been, at least, questionable under the circumstances of late 1939: certainly, dangerous and almost surely ineffective. It was unlikely to deter, precisely because there was almost nothing Britain could do to back it up or to help Poland if attacked. But British inaction (which actually followed, in the Phony War of 1939-40) despite this commitment, and in the face of inevitable Polish defeat, ^{was} ^{praxe} would be one more encouragement to take the later step of attacking the Western allies who had declared war on Germany, as happened in 1940.

Yet the Chamberlain commitment, unnecessary, unhelpful and unwise as my interlocutors thought it to be (a judgment totally unfamiliar to me at the time, at the turn of the decade), had been, they thought, virtually inescapable for him, for basically domestically political reasons: his own political embarrassment, and the domestic demands aroused, by Hitler's taking Prague, flaunting the assurances he had made, and Chamberlain had publicly accepted at and after Munich.

Thus the sequence. First, the Allies failed to reject Hitler's demands at Munich, when the Allies had a very strong legal position, had made clear treaty commitments, and confronted Hitler with a strong, well-equipped Czech Army behind strong border fortifications. This last combination might well have defeated the

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 offensive Hitler not only threatened but planned. Hitler's generals knew this better than he did--and even they were shocked, on later occupying the fortifications, to realize the risks Hitler had been running--which had led to serious military planning to oppose him.

Chamberlain's acceptance of Hitler's invitation to negotiate postponed plans for a coup, and the Allies' concessions ended internal German opposition to Hitler's increasingly confident aggressive moves and later encouraged Hitler to move on Prague, removing the Czech Army (which had lost its fortifications) as a power factor.

In turn, this violation of the Munich agreement, and (inevitable) British inaction led to a public demand to "do something" to oppose Hitler; and Chamberlain's personal political embarrassment and vulnerability in this situation made it necessary to promise to "do something strong next time," in response to his inability to do anything at the moment and his embarrassment at having failed to foresee this move, having in fact predicted the opposite, and being so disregarded as a threat by Hitler.

Thus a failure to uphold a clear commitment in a situation where the military balance was actually favorable to the Allies led--as these analysts saw it--to a dangerously questionable commitment likely to be challenged in a military situation that was totally unfavorable, almost hopeless (precisely given the loss of the Czechs as an ally).

The foreseeable failure to carry out this commitment in any effective way when--as was virtually inevitable--it failed to deter and it was challenged--would in turn both encourage further attacks, at last close to home and inescapable, and demoralize efforts to prepare for these effectively.

As a challenge to what still seems the usual account--that the British guarantee to Poland was unarguable, a merely belated recognition of what had to be done to deter and confront Hitler--this argument that it had been a questionable and costly consequence of the earlier decision to back down was unfamiliar to me when I first heard it, and I am still not in a position to appraise it critically. The point here is not that it is necessarily valid in all respects, but that I can testify it was believed by more than one significant associates of my work in Washington, and I inferred the analogy operating in a number of allusions, at critical moments, in support of controversial, risky and violent moves, to the overriding objective of "avoiding World War III."

The potential here for a self-serving, dangerous use of this analogy in support of reckless courses actually undertaken primarily for domestic political or otherwise insufficient reasons, is obvious: or perhaps I should say, not obvious enough, to those

making or hearing the justification. (As the Pentagon Papers record repeatedly, nearly every disastrous escalation in Vietnam was justified by someone--Henry Cabot Lodge, Walt Rostow, LBJ and Dean Rusk come to mind--as inspired by the need to "avoid World War III." Nixon continued this trend, which resumed under Reagan and Bush during the "new Cold War").

Rarely is the logic spelled out, nor is it obvious on its face to a generation born after the Thirties, except for the element of the potential encouragement of the appetite and wishfulness of aggressors.

But as I have tried to point out, the underlying logic includes a more esoteric element, which bears on the dynamics of commitment in the "appeaser's" society and personal psychology. In one version of this, Chamberlain is actually criticised not only for his backdown at Munich but, under the ensuing circumstances, for his subsequent unilateral commitment to Poland. Even if the latter is seen as inescapable or appropriate, the political costs and consequences of making such a commitment and then not acting on it is seen as a cost of the original backdown, operating through non-rational psychological processes of humiliation, mass and individual self-esteem, desires for reprisal or revenge, and a general domestic shift towards the hawkish, chauvinistic right.

I personally recall an unusual discussion in the Pentagon in the spring of 1965 of the merit of committing ground troops to avert defeat, with my former RAND colleague Albert Wohlstetter, in which he argued that it would be bad for the domestic politics of this country, and ultimately for world peace in terms of the resulting changes inside this country, for the US to suffer a military defeat. Americans would not respond "well" to that, he warned; the results would be a turn to the right and probably to militarism that would be bad not only for Democrats, liberals and their domestic constituents and concerns but ultimately for foreigners as well.

(In 1969, the troops having been sent, with inconclusive and disastrous results, I heard the domestic side of that argument repeated from Democrats like Paul Warnke and Harry McPherson when I urged that Democrats take the lead in pulling the troops out: "We would be accused of losing the war, having gotten us in; there would be a political bloodbath such as you have never seen, and that means you and me, Dan."

I heard that argument as unacceptably political, then, as an excuse for passive complicity in the ongoing physical bloodbath in Indochina. But I mention it here to say that I don't doubt that if the argument had been pursued, such people would have pointed out quite sincerely that such a development inside the US could plausibly lead to further military involvements that would be even more violent and dangerous. This did not seem to me an adequate

reason for our continuing to kill people in Indochina then, either, but for those who sincerely thought it did, it made their international and moral commitments compatible with their domestic political calculations).

Yet another element of this calculation--the second part alluded to earlier--is the prediction that this dynamic will be underestimated in the government "winning" the first confrontation. Having just shown a commitment in its adversary to be a bluff or unreliable, it fails to appreciate that its next, growing challenge may elicit a new commitment that is more reliable, for that very reason. The combination, of course, is all the more dangerous.

However well this model fits the 1939-40 events, it was operating, I believe, in the minds of top decision-makers not only in the Cuban Missile Crisis but in the earlier Berlin crisis in 1961. And it has, in my opinion still, a good deal of basis in historical precedent, and relevance to the future.

It could be argued (though I don't recall seeing the point in print) that it is in terms of this pattern that there is a good deal of analogy between the events leading up to World War I and to World War II, which (in the clear absence of a Hitler in the former case) otherwise seem so different.

(1) Nearly every participant prior to World War I had participated in earlier confrontations and "crises" one or more of which had resulted in humiliating backdowns by one party, none of which had ended in violent threats being carried out;

2) This had led to general confidence that demonstration alerts and deployments, demands and threats, would be settled short of conflict, despite rhetorical posturing and commitment;

3) Yet in fact, by 1914, a number of key states had concluded that they could not afford to back off "this time, yet again," precisely in view of past humiliations and in fear of encouraging future, worse challenges, including internal ones, i.e., fear of a combination of domestic, intra-empire and external pressures.

The sequence of "mini-Munichs" had both encouraged new challenges and--underestimated by the challengers--made new commitments more likely and stronger. The explosion that resulted came as a surprise precisely because earlier "appeasements" had made it seem unlikely, while in fact these same "appeasements" had created an anti-appeasement, confrontational and resolute mood.

(The effects of alert and mobilization planning and emphasis on offensive warplans is another important factor, which did not figure so strongly in World War II, on the Allied side. Why not? Because the failure of the offensive, and the dangers of the

earlier reliance on it and the pressure to preempt, led the French in particular away from it, to rely disastrously on defensive arrangements alone.

In turn, failures in World War II of the defense (foreseeable in nuclear war) and a Cold War preoccupation with Hitlerian tactics (hence with nuclear war) had a strong potential for recreating in the subsequent nuclear era the stability problems and pressures to preempt that preceded World War I. This has been my particular concern in the last 15 years, as it was (given an illusory belief in the missile gap) in the late-50's until late 1961. (Large numbers of Soviet missiles on Cuba would have made this concern valid and immediate!)

World War I, in turn, made the resolute individual and alliance commitments that immediately preceded it look dangerous, and this was a factor in the "climate of appeasement" that both encouraged and, at first, rewarded Hitler: until his successes--like the crises-ending-short-of-war before World War I--encouraged him to "go too far" and simultaneously impelled his adversaries to take a stand.

Thus, it is not only generals who "fight the last war." In focussing on avoiding the mistakes that they, or their fathers, made "last time," politicians and diplomats create the conditions for new mistakes: or, strikingly often, not so new, but the mistakes of their "grandfathers," the errors of the "time before that." The word "dialectic" suggests itself rather compellingly.

Not only was this pattern in the minds of Kennedy Administration officials in 1961 and 1962, but Kennedy's own behavior is a striking example of it, a confirmation of its validity.

On the one hand, Kennedy officials tended to suspect--with somewhat guilty consciences, ~~or~~ having internalized the criticisms of their hardline opponents--that Khrushchev had been encouraged to make a move they regarded as unforeseeably reckless by what they suspected he saw as a sequence of weak, perhaps cowardly backdowns earlier: in particular, his failure to provide air support to the Bay of Pigs landing, to intervene in Laos, or to challenge the Berlin Wall.

He had, he believed (as James Reston revealed) given a personal impression of immaturity and weakness to Khrushchev at Vienna, following the humiliation of the Bay of Pigs. Most recently, in face of strong Republican pressure to do so, he had refused to take direct action to halt the large-scale buildup of Soviet military equipment and advisors in Cuba.

Khrushchev's move, unpredicted by CIA intelligence analysts

and especially by Kennedy, now seemed to confirm that Khrushchev had "misread" these decisions as "appeasement-like," just as had his most hawkish Republican critics. (The Kennedy officials were hawkish enough Cold Warriors themselves to believe in the plausibility of this, just as their Cold War orientation disposed them--i.e., us, including me--to believe that it would follow that this conclusion would encourage Khrushchev to make direct, provocative challenges. Only the risk of response, Cold Warriors believed, inhibited such challenges as a matter of course, and any attenuation of that fear "invited" tests and encroachments.

The secrecy of the Soviets' move was seen as indicating an awareness that it was illegitimate, something that would be done "only if you could get away with it" on the basis of a fait accompli in the context of American weakness or cowardice. For Russians apparently to confirm the Republican charge that Kennedy had been giving that impression was costly both on the domestic front and the international; and Kennedy could not escape personal responsibility for having (supposedly) given rise to this Soviet impression.

In fact, it is not clear at all that such an assessment was involved in the Soviet project, or indeed that this was Khrushchev's judgment of Kennedy or his past actions at all. (See Ned Lebow's article on this, and comments by Sergo Mikoyan and Sergei Khrushchev rejecting this interpretation). The record is murky, incomplete and quite mixed on this subject; there is at least as much evidence now that Khrushchev found Kennedy's behavior provocative as that he saw it as "weak."

A brief comment on the implications of the secrecy surrounding the attempted fait accompli: I conclude, tentatively, that, as Sergo Mikoyan asserts, this reflected the expectation that Kennedy would almost surely commit an act of war, illegal in peacetime--a blockade--to prevent the delivery of missiles as well as other military equipment if the Soviets announced publicly their intention in advance.

In other words, the Soviets probably thought it necessary to do secretly what the Americans themselves had done openly, what was legal for both, precisely because they foresaw dangerous, violent, illegal or aggressive American countermeasures otherwise. This is not a Soviet judgment of presidential "weakness," or of unduly constraining liberal commitment to international norms.

Moreover, countering any impression of weakness with respect to Cuba, Khrushchev knew (from Cuban penetrations) of Operation Mongoose, aimed at the overthrow of Castro, and (from American exercises) of tacit threats and preparations potentially to invade Cuba in 1962. But most Republicans and even most American officials (even including, probably, the Republican Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, who was invited to sit on the ExCom)

knew nothing of these. If they had, it would have been easier to suppose that Khrushchev had felt challenged or provoked into risky moves than that he had felt "invited" by weakness.

Now, Kennedy himself, of course, was well aware of Mongoose and of preparations for possible invasion (which, in fact, in early October went beyond anything he could have expected Khrushchev to know). Moreover, this was also true of many of the key participants in the ExCom, who oversaw covert operations: McGeorge Bundy, Maxwell Taylor, Robert Kennedy (essentially in charge of Mongoose, along with Taylor), Alexis Johnson in State and Roswell Gilpatric in Defense and their bosses Rusk and McNamara. How could it be that there is no record in the available transcripts of October 16 (or later) of any mention of Mongoose, or recent urgent readiness for possible invasion, or of the implications of these for Khrushchev's possible motives?

This calls for extensive analysis, elsewhere. The point I want to make here is that Kennedy had reason to know that the impression of his prior weakness with respect to Cuba had not been given to Khrushchev or Castro so much as to his domestic Republican critics, who were moreover likely to make the (probably invalid) inference that he had actually "invited" this Soviet move thereby. That impression, charge and inference was thus--as McNamara put it--a domestic political problem. This consideration, by itself, does suggest that the crisis was, above all, a domestic one for Kennedy.

(It is not the whole story. Republicans would also charge--and Kennedy might have feared that it might be true--that his earlier backdowns on the Bay of Pigs and perhaps on the Wall--had also contributed to an impression in Khrushchev's mind that had led to this, and that had to be refuted to avoid future confrontations.

Still, it is interesting to note that this problem, insofar as it was domestic political, reflected Kennedy's inability to tell the American public, and his political opponents, something that his foreign adversaries actually knew: that he was acting "boldly," aggressively, as some of his domestic rivals were challenging him to do.

He could not tell them this, and take away their challenge, because his actual program was "covert," designed to be "plausibly denied": denied plausibly to the American public, not to his adversaries, because the program--which his hawkish rivals would presumably have approved, or were even calling for--was, after all, illegal, aggressive, and dangerously provocative of largescale conflict!

[Bay of Pigs, 1960; Mongoose; U-2, 1956-60; 34A and plans for Rolling Thunder, 1964-65. See Nixon in My Six Crises, on the dilemma posed for him by JFKs taunts on the need to support

U2
1964, VN
34A

contras. (Likewise, JFK was pressing on the missile gap. But N wasn't tempted to reveal what the U2 really showed, because like Rockefeller but unlike Ike or Gates he wanted to preserve the sense of Soviet threat himself). (nuc threats and Taiwan Straits crises: assurance that Chinese wouldn't invade). Presidential restraint on revelation; and see Soviet inferences on American ability to keep secrets! But in each case, President's problem of how to appear tough enough without revealing what he was actually doing.] (See Reagan's inability to reveal invasion plans, which made sense of contras and of Central American deployments).

US ability
to keep
secrets: in
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[see effects of Republican taunting on JFK; as, of Democratic taunting on Bush, leading to Panama invasion (he couldn't tell all covert ops, which were't working fast).]

Also, he couldn't tell the public this before October 16 because--as in the case of LBJ in the campaign of 1964--he wanted to be able to use the covert program as a possible source of provocation of or simulation of enemy actions that would enable him to "retaliate" openly with direct American intervention. (The Bay of Pigs was probably planned the same way, but aborted).

After October 16, it was too late to take credit for his earlier covert pressures, because they seemed to have led only to this! ...to a Soviet countermove that appeared to, and might eventually, shift the strategic balance, reduce stability disastrously, encourage Soviet moves against Berlin...and meanwhile, lock the door against US invasion of Cuba! Nor would it be helpful in attacking or bargaining the Soviet missiles out of Cuba to have to admit that illegal aggressive moves by the US had probably been the provocation and the political legitimation of the Soviet deployment! (So instead: the secret of Mongoose and of October contingency planning for invasion was excluded from any discussion in the ExCom and kept successfully from the public: Mongoose, for 15 years; The basic premises of Mongoose planning--that US intervention would ultimately be necessary to meet the Mongoose objective of overthrowing Castro--and the pattern of invasion exercises and contingency planning and preparations for invasion, for 28 years.)

~~has been secret for~~ see Geschloss.

(Compare what happened on August 2 and 3, 1964, when North Vietnamese torpedo boats approached and were interpreted as attempting to attack a US destroyer on intelligence patrol. The Administration briefed Congressional leaders, including Republicans, secretly on the fact that the Vietnamese might have, plausibly but "mistakenly" associated the destroyer with covert attacks against North Vietnam being made by the "South Vietnamese" (in fact, CIA-controlled missions, mainly manned by non-Vietnamese). Hence it would not be appropriate to retaliate, this time: though the destroyer patrol was doubled and sent back, and the covert raids--which were, in fact, associated with it--were continued.

A mistaken belief on the following stormy night by the destroyer commanders that they were again under attack--i.e., to put it another way, their plausible though mistaken belief, in a situation of zero visibility, that the same pattern of US behavior had again provoked Vietnamese response--not unnaturally ensued, which this time allowed the President to do openly what his opponent had been calling on him to do and what he had been secretly preparing for over months.

In the first meeting of the ExCom on October 16, 1962, JFK purported to want to respond as LBJ later did to the supposed "second" Vietnamese attack of August 4, 1964: with a fait accompli consisting of a military attack destroying the offending vehicles (missiles in 1962, torpedo boats, bases and petrol stocks in 1964. (LBJ had in that case, less than two years later, almost the same principal advisors that JFK gathered on the ExCom: Bundy, McNamara, Rusk, Maxwell Taylor, McCone).

TC
~ FA

But there were crucial differences from the '64 Tonkin Gulf situation that blocked this approach in 1964. (I suspect that JFK had abandoned this impulse, if he really supported it when he said so as late as midday October 16, by that evening or the next day, as his principal advisor McNamara had done even earlier. O'Donnell's memoir indicates clearly that he had rejected an air strike for a blockade no later than Thursday morning, October 18, --when he instructed RFK to bring the ExCom around to a consensus on the blockade--or well before his supposed "conversion" by the ExCom on October 20.)

In '62, unlike '64, Kennedy was confronting the Soviets directly, the targets were nuclear-tipped missiles one or more of which might be launched under attack, and the "provocation" consisted not of an armed and purportedly "unprovoked" attack on US forces but of a perfectly legal deployment following US precedents.

But there is another comparison to be made: for the first time here, to my knowledge. On October 16, Kennedy could not do what LBJ did on August 2: secretly explain inaction to Congressional leaders on the basis of possible provocation of the Soviets. The Soviet response was too serious for JFK to be willing to admit having probably provoked it. (His administration never did: even in the ExCom meetings. Thus there was no discussion or known consideration of this option at all).

Neither was there, more notably, any known discussion among any of the ExCom participants prior to Khrushchev's letter of October 26 of a quite plausible alternative either to military attack or threat or to a bargain based on a trade of missile bases. [Note: again, the discussion which follows, which probably does not

belong at this length here, is essentially a new thought for me: and as far as I know, for anyone else. July 20, 1990.]

This alternative was to exploit a secret "bargaining chip" whose possible importance to the Soviets and Cubans was not known to any American outsiders to the Administration in 1962 or for 15-25 years later, but which many of the ExCom members knew enough about to guess at and which they might have well have proposed to explore: a proposal that the Soviets withdraw their missiles in exchange for an American pledge not to invade Cuba, not to continue to launch covert attacks upon the island or to permit and support attacks by others, and not to continue attempting to assassinate Fidel Castro.

By October 16, it seems, with the missiles actually on the island and Soviet troops present in large numbers, Castro himself would probably have preferred to keep the missiles than to have a "verbal" pledge, which he would not trust. We know this because this is the attitude he actually took when the Soviets ended, without consulting him, by actually agreeing to withdraw the missiles in exchange for a no-invasion pledge (no mention of covert operations or assassination attempts, both of which, in fact, continued on a reduced scale).

But that was not the attitude of the Soviets by October 27; and it might well not have been their attitude on October 16, or on October 18 when JFK could have discussed this in the White House with Gromyko. The proposal could have been accompanied by a threat, either more or less explicitly stated, of possible or likely US forceful action, such as blockade, if it were rejected.

Note that the proposed package goes beyond the no-invasion pledge that was (rather ambiguously, in the end) the basis of formal settlement: though that alone might have been enough for an early settlement, in the light of our recently-acquired knowledge of the serious basis for Soviet concern about possible invasion. And it is also notable that this pledge, by itself, was not at all discussed in the early "secret" phase of the crisis nor for several days after the blockade began. But the additional part of this possible package--a definite commitment to cease sabotage and other covert attacks and perhaps--this would have to be very delicately and tacitly communicated--cease trying to assassinate Cuba's leader--was neither offered in the end nor ever, so far as the record shows, discussed at all.

These would have been, in October 1962, very substantial "concessions." Even Castro might have been persuaded, if the commitments could have been made credible enough. (He might have asked further--as he did during the crisis--for the ending of Cuba's economic and diplomatic isolation). But the Soviets would surely have been, at the least, very tempted. They might well have

accepted this.

Some would say that combined with even an implicit hint of possible forceful action, this offer would almost certainly have been accepted by Khrushchev. (Victor Sergeev, who has studied the crisis for years at the USA and Canada Institute, is convinced that Khrushchev would almost certainly have withdrawn the missiles if Kennedy had simply revealed to Gromyko that the attempted fait accompli had been discovered. His argument supporting this judgement is not totally compelling; but his positive judgment of the acceptability of the above offer, especially along with a tactical threat, can be predicted, and it would have far more plausibility).

American analysts up till 1987, and most perhaps even since then, would not agree, because they have always seen the strategic advantages to the Soviets of keeping missiles on Cuba as predominant in Soviet calculations. But this judgment by most American scholars has crucially reflected their total ignorance--until Jim Hershberg's revelations starting in 1987 and published in great detail only this summer--of the reality of US preparations for possible invasion, or the seriousness with which planners saw Mongoose as primarily a precursor to invasion, along with assassination efforts. (The Mongoose documents showing this were released only this spring, after the Moscow Conference on Cuba II).

The idea of a diplomatic or private bargaining approach instead of the public confrontation and announcement of blockade was certainly considered--both during the crisis, from the beginning, and in subsequent discussions--and the private reasoning against it has never been satisfactorily or convincingly presented.

What was to be lost or risked in exploring Soviet willingness to settle the issue privately? That is a question I will consider in detail elsewhere; I conjecture that there were some serious possible disadvantages to this approach, from the Administration point of view.

But no one, to my knowledge, has ever focussed on the possible effectiveness of these particular offers, which might have been considered either separately (as, finally, the no-invasion part was) or as a package. Rather, the potential quid pro quos for the removal of the missiles are left unspecified, or focus on trades of missile or other bases. The judgment is implied that--in the absence of forceful threats accompanied by dramatic demonstrative actions (like the blockade)--the US had little to offer that might appear adequate compensation to the Soviets for their deployment.

Meanwhile, both the Cubans and Soviets, privately and publicly, had been for nearly a year complaining repeatedly and vociferously about US preparations to invade Cuba, and about

ongoing US-sponsored covert attacks on the island. (Not, I believe, about assassination attempts, though Castro knew of at least some of these). The President and the key members of the ExCom knew throughout this period that these complaints were not just propaganda, paranoia or hysteria, contrary to Administration declarations.

The Administration may have doubted, through the spring of 1962, that the Soviets actually cared as much as they purported about the threat to Cuba. (Here there may have been a genuine, significant failure of empathy, a not-unusual failure to apply "mirror-image reasoning," to ask how we would have felt about the prospect of "losing" a comparable ally, and what we might have thought about doing to avoid that). But as heavy shipments of Soviet equipment began to arrive in the early summer of 1962, this evidence of real Soviet concern must have been in the minds both of analysts and decision-makers.

Since most of them rejected the hypothesis that the buildup aimed eventually at a change in the strategic balance by introducing missiles, they must have asked why the Soviets were making this expensive investment (to which the Republicans were drawing public attention continuously). And for those high-level officials who knew about Mongoose and the pattern of maneuvers practising invasion--which did not include, so Ray Garthoff tells me, CIA analysts in the Directorate of Intelligence or State intelligence analysts in INR or the Political-Military Directorate--this question had an easy answer, as did the question, in light of these shipments, as to whether the Soviets cared very much about losing Cuba.

(This could explain, by the way, (for the first time, so far as I am aware) why John McCone, the Director of Central Intelligence, disagreed with all his own analysts in CIA's DDI, including the Office of National Estimates, about the likelihood that the Soviets would go so far as to put missiles in Cuba. He knew about Mongoose, as (according to Garthoff--who himself was ignorant of Mongoose working in Political-Military Affairs) his analysts did not! We cannot learn from the record of his communications with his analysts how much relative importance he gave to this Soviet motive--compared, say, to improving the strategic balance--because he evidently did not feel free to inform his analysts of the evidence that this motive might have any weight at all.

Reformers of the intelligence community often urge that Operations and Estimates be further separated, to avoid the alleged contamination of Estimates by the wishes and recommendations of the Covert Operators. But here is a case--certainly not the only one--in which the efforts of intelligence analysts to interpret Soviet and Cuban motivation and behavior on a crucial issue were almost totally subverted by compartmentation, by their enforced ignorance

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knew they
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of actual operations known to the high officials they were trying to advise and to the Soviets but not to themselves. In these circumstances the fact that Clandestine Operations and Intelligence Analysis are housed in the same agency and building failed to have any benefit in the production of relevant intelligence estimates, given the fact that operators were not permitted to inform estimators of their own activities.

Interestingly, this exact situation had arisen, with the same extremely costly consequences, in the period leading up to Cuba I, the Bay of Pigs, where intelligence analysts were not called upon for special estimates because they were not cleared for the operational plans, and their ongoing interpretations of Cuban affairs were uninformed by data well known to Cuban penetrators in the contras. Despite all the vaunted lesson-learning from "The Perfect Failure," this particular absurdity was immediately replicated.

Thus, the key "witting" officials were forced to be their own intelligence analysts, as the Soviet buildup proceeded and finally culminated in the deployment of missiles. Still, to someone in the know about US contingency plans, maneuvers and covert operators, it would not seem to take a highly trained and experienced intelligence analyst to make a good guess about Soviet motives--such as, that the Soviets might actually mean what they had been saying to us and the world about their concerns regarding Cuba over the last year, and specifically in September and October--or an equally good guess as to what offers and assurances might look relevant and attractive enough to the Soviets and Cubans to induce a return to the status quo ante.

Yet we find in the available record, either before or during the crisis until its final days no evidence of any consideration of either of these. Not until there is discussion of the Fomin proposal or the Krushchev letter of October 26 is there any mention at all of a no-invasion pledge as possibly an important element in achieving a settlement (even then it is discussed as if it were an insubstantial face-saving device to cover a Soviet backdown) let alone any earlier thought of actually proposing this to the Soviets as a possible resolution, either before the blockade or after.

Nor is there any mention at all of possible termination of the heavy program of covert operations into and against Cuba as a possible bargaining counter.

How can this be?

One interpretation of this omission from the recorded discussion is that it reflects a massive, systematic failure of individual and group cognition and imagination. This is not entirely to be dismissed, but it is not the only hypothesis worth exploring.

Another is that the record, in particular of ExCom discussions, is simply incomplete. Even for the two days for which major transcripts are available, there are admitted deletions for security. These could certainly cover discussions of Mongoose and prior invasion plans--even though Mongoose had been revealed in the Church Committee reports, well before these transcriptions were made. (The crucial relation of Mongoose planning to invasion planning had not been revealed, however).

However, if the subsequent interpretations of Soviet behavior reflecting knowledge of Mongoose were also deleted (no such interpretations appear in the transcripts or summaries), along with any discussion of possible bargains involving no-invasion or no covert attack pledges, the deletions would be very large indeed. And much of the discussion that does appear, in particular indicating perplexity about Soviet motives, would be hard to understand. Still, this possibility is not to be dismissed.

Yet another explanation would be that the President and those other members of the ExCom who were "witting" about covert operations and contingency plans and maneuvers regarding Cuba chose not to enlighten those other members who were previously unwitting, thus truncating allowable discussion within the larger group. This is quite plausible. It means that serious discussion about Soviet motives and hence, possible Soviet reactions to US moves and to potential US proposals would have to go on outside the ExCom meetings, in much smaller groups; but that would be only normal.

That does, however, raise the question (quite new to discussions of the crisis): What was the function of the larger ExCom at all, in that case? (I have a conjecture on that point, to be discussed elsewhere. Briefly, I suspect that the full-scale ExCom--especially in the week prior to October 22, Kennedy's public statement--was essentially not a decision-making body but a consensus-building and manipulative exercise, meant to persuade several unwitting participants--such as, in particular, Douglas Dillon--to a politically safe view of the origins of the crisis and the appropriateness of Kennedy's preferred course (so far as they were allowed to understand it). In the second week, it offered itself as a useful implementing group, though at the price of getting somewhat out of the President's control on Saturday, October 27.

A respectful but "insubordinate" response by ExCom members led by McGeorge Bundy to Kennedy's desire to accept "Soviet" terms (trading missile bases in Cuba and Turkey) that he had himself secretly suggested to the Soviets two days earlier, led (I believe) Kennedy to modify and postpone his own planned resolution by a day or more and meanwhile to make a final ultimatum that he privately regarded as an unpromising bluff.

(With the help, unknown to Kennedy, of unauthorized action by a Soviet SAM commander and by Castro and his antiaircraft gunners, this temporary rejection of the deal that Kennedy himself had privately proposed earlier in favor of a bluff had the ironic effect that the diplomatic compromise that Kennedy expected to make--mounting to Soviet victory--was preempted by Soviet surrender,)

How is it that all analysts so far have failed to notice the omission from the available materials and the records of ExCom sessions of any indication that anyone considered proposing a pledge not to invade or to launch or support covert attacks as a possible settlement of the crisis?

After all, the crisis was formally settled in the end on the basis of a no-invasion pledge; and Castro at that time and afterwards was demanding an end to covert attacks. How is it that no outsider has ever asked the question: Might that settlement have been reached earlier? Why wasn't proposing it considered?

The answer is that until data became available from Jim Hershberg and from Soviets in late 1987, and from Mongoose files in early 1990--summarized in Jim Hershberg's article in Diplomatic History just this summer of 1990--these outsiders (and insiders like myself and Garthoff, and some unwitting members of the ExCom) were totally unaware of the substantial basis that the Soviets and Cubans had for concern that Cuba might be invaded, and hence the potential power of a credible no-invasion pledge.

Information on the scale of Mongoose attacks was available a decade earlier, but no real hint of the relation of Mongoose planning, aims and operations to possible US invasion. Thus, it would not have seemed related to possible Soviet motives for deploying the missiles or other equipment or Cuban motives for accepting them.

Why were we all unaware of this--despite a copious record of Soviet and Cuban charges and complaints at the time, and emphasis in all official Soviet statements after October 28 and later in Khrushchev's memoirs on the US invasion threat as the reason for deploying the missiles and the no-invasion pledge as the reason for removing them?

Basically because we believed our leaders, JFK and his officials, when they dismissed these charges and complaints and denied any planning for invasion: as McGeorge Bundy and McNamara were still doing as late as this year (though McNamara changed his denial of "any planning" to denial of "intent" and admitted a plausible "appearance" of potential intent). We believed their lies at the time, and curiously, continued to do so even after Vietnam. And their secrecy was very good. It was virtually

watertight on these points for 25 years.

As to why the Soviets were not believed at all--why their own explanations, before 1987 were treated by our analysts as if they had never been uttered, as being wholly dismissable--there were a number of reasons I will discuss elsewhere. (It is a question worthy of note and reflection, in retrospect, from an epistemological and historiographical point of view).

But the substantive question is: Why did not JFK himself propose, or consider proposing, this resolution of the problem, either along with or before his announcement of the blockade? Why did not the witting members of the ExCom suggest that he do so? He and they did have strong reason to know that such a proposal might work to remove the missiles: perhaps without any public crisis at all.

And such a deal was surely acceptable to them: undoubtedly it would have seemed so on October 16, as well as on October 27, when they proposed it. Why did they not even consider or discuss finding out whether it might be acceptable to the Soviets?

(Note, by the way, that two of the advisors who almost surely did not know either of Mongoose or of the preparations for invasion were the two Soviet experts consulted, Chip Bohlen--before he left for Paris--and Llewellyn Thompson. There is no indication that either were informed on these matters during the crisis--which considerably limited the value of their inferences on Soviet motives!--so as to get their judgment, for example, of the possible acceptability of such a deal. Such is the price that Presidents are willing to pay to maintain compartmentation of information!)

First of all, we do not know for sure that this possibility was not considered at all. It may have been deleted from the ExCom transcripts and minutes; and it may have been incorporated in the efforts by Bundy and Sorensen to draft a private communication to Khrushchev in the early days of the crisis, whose contents are not available. We do know the proposal was not made, and that no hint of consideration of this--if there was any--was allowed to remain in the records. Why not?

The reason seems to me clearly to be that such a proposal prior to the blockade, and even any leak that it had been considered, would have seemed dangerous in domestic political terms: in particular, just before a Congressional election, but just as importantly in the months and years afterward. (The subtitle of the article by Paterson and Brophy conveys its real scope: "The Cuban Missile Crisis and American Politics, 1962." But the political pressures expressed and intensified in 1962 had meaning for the President and a potential influence on his decisions that went far beyond their bearing on "November elections" alone.)

The Republican opponents who were already focussing on Soviet aid to Cuba as the main issue of the fall campaign would have been outraged at a no-invasion pledge (never mind the demands of international law, the UN Charter or the OAS Charter!), and most of all in the context of this most provocative Soviet deployment. They were angry and critical of the deal 13 days later, but after most of the country, and much of the world, had been scared out of its wits for five dramatic days their carping was lost in a wave of relief.

At the same time, on October 16 and thereafter, most of the country would have been extremely critical if they learned--as the very proposal would suggest--that a covert program had led to this, provocatively. That is an inference that the Administration took extreme care to avert, by secrecy and denials, not only at the outset and during the crisis, but ever afterwards, up to the present.

After five days of overt crisis on the brink of war between nuclear powers, after giving the Soviets the obvious incentive to compromise or concede in order to reduce a clear and credible risk of general war, the Administration could plausibly present this threat as the sole reason for Soviet acceptance, presenting its no-invasion pledge as an insubstantial face-saving favor to the Soviets, no real concession at all.¹

Thus it avoided any domestic inference that earlier, unacknowledged (and illegal, even if potentially domestically popular) Administration moves might have contributed to this problem: that the crisis did not start with the Soviet deployment (as implied in the US framing of the incident as a "missile crisis") but with earlier US pressures on Cuba (to which the Soviets allude in referring always to a "Caribbean crisis").

The price of this successful effort to frame the episode in this way, to manage public awareness of the problem and appreciation of the outcome was that there had to be a dramatic crisis, with a genuine risk of US-Soviet war.

It might have turned out, if Kennedy had explored private negotiations, that there was no acceptable alternative to such a

¹ The threat and risk--including the risk of loss of control Khrushchev was consciously confronting on October 27--might well have been sufficient by this point to bring a Soviet concession, even without a no-invasion pledge. The issue the Administration was obscuring was that it might never have been necessary to take moves incurring such risks of war if Kennedy had been willing--if he "could have afforded"--to take the domestic political risk of proposing a negotiated outcome at the outset or soon after.

crisis. But he chose not to explore such an alternative with the Soviets; he chose instead the certainty of crisis, with real risk; even, however small, a risk of ultimate catastrophe. And the reason he did so, almost surely, was "American politics, 1962."